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SHOOTING

ON

UPLAND, MARSH, AND STREAM.

A SERIES OF ARTICLES

WRITTEN BY PROMINENT SPORTSMEN, DESCRIPTIVE OF HUNTING THE UPLAND BIRDS OF AMERICA, EXPOSING THEIR FLIGHTS, HABITS, RESORTS, AND THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MANNER OF PURSUING THEM WITH THE GUN; AND TREATING ESPECIALLY OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHODS OF SHOOTING DUCKS, PRAIRIE CHICKENS, GROUSE, WILD TURKEYS, WILD GEESE, WILD PIGEONS, SNIPE, QUAIL, WOODCOCK, AND PLOVERS.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM BRUCE LEFFINGWELL,
(HORACE)
AUTHOR OF "WILD FOWL SHOOTING."

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED.

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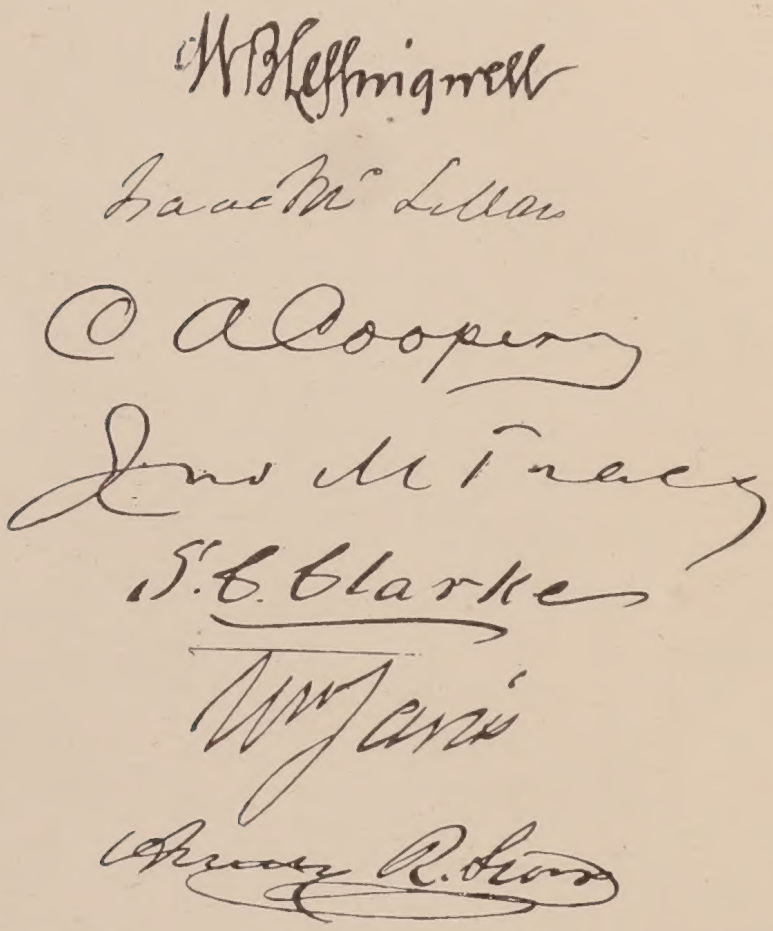
1890

To the Sportsmen of America
This Book is Dedicated,
While We Convey to Them that Fraternal Love,
that Always Has, and We Trust Always Will,
Dwell in the Hearts of True Sportsmen,
One for the Other.



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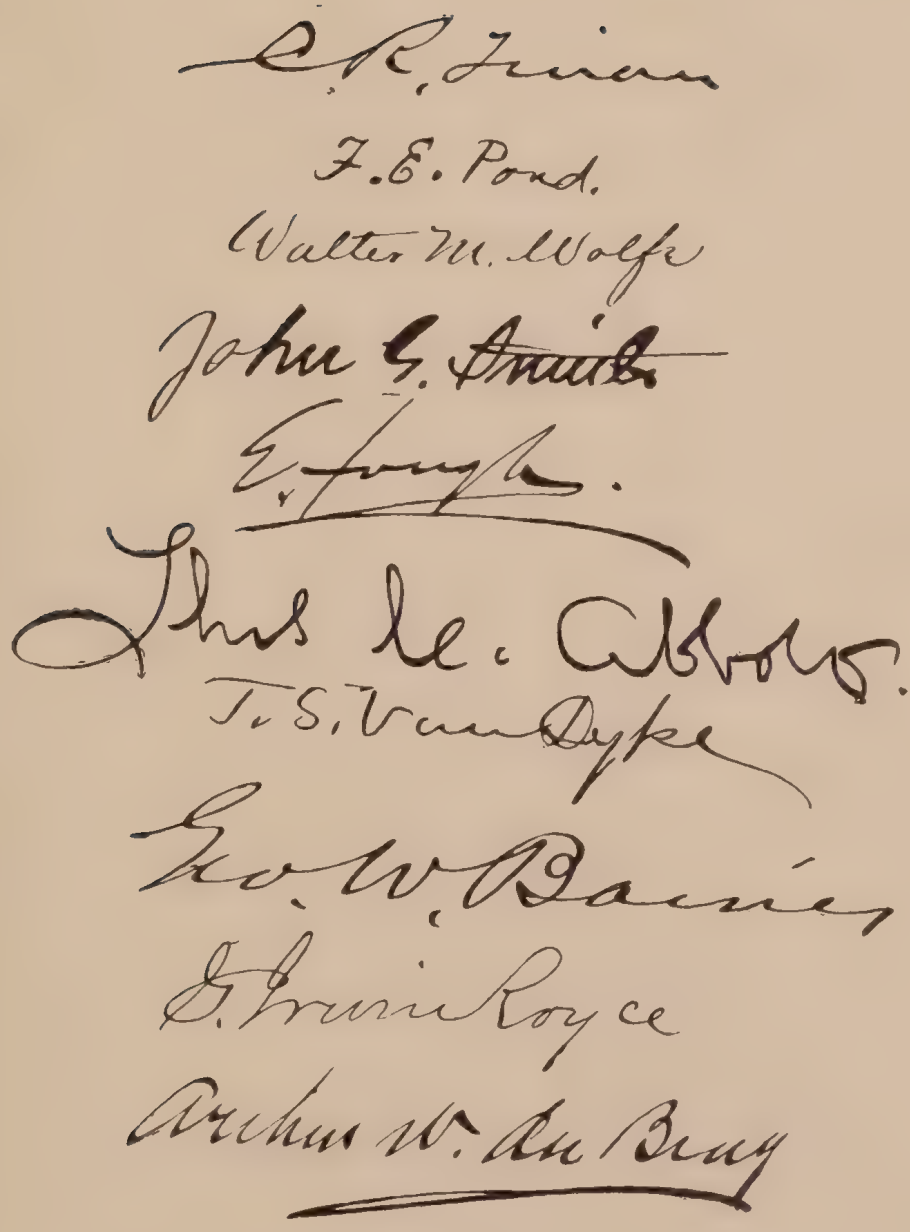

INTRODUCTION.

The flattering reception with which "Wild Fowl Shooting" was received throughout the United States, and portions of the Old World, was the incentive for the publication of this book; for, acting on the solicitations of many of the sporting fraternity, who love the freshness of the field and the purity of the prairie winds, I bring into the world another book, which I trust and believe will be equally acceptable and enjoyable, and one that will teach to this and to the coming generation that there is a nobility of character in the true sportsman, that will ever show itself, whether at home or in the field, and that our love of field sports does not arise from the desire to slaughter needlessly the feathered game, or mercilessly to extinguish animal kind, but leads to the protection of game; and that, when the law is open to us, our pleasures are equally divided between bagging the birds, and seeing the dogs, filled with animation, bounding over hill and dale, or standing entranced and petrified as they point the hidden game. To see the whirring birds, that cause our hearts to throb in fluttering excitement, to wander over the fields in the warm, budding spring-time, when the earth is clothed in bridal raiments, or when the golden summer, rich in her harvest, has dotted the earth with sheaves of ripened grain—this is our enjoyment.

Let not the reader labor under the delusion, that the capturing of a large quantity of game is the extreme desire of the true sportsman; for the more adept one becomes in the capturing of the animal species, the less

he cares for the game, one of his greatest delights being in the secret satisfaction of knowing that the birds, no matter how wary they may be, are not keen enough to circumvent him and his well-trained dogs. Knowing this, he desires that when he is afield all should be propitious. The day, the fields, the streams, should be in their perfectness. All thoughts of business banished, he would be away from the din and bustle of city life, and would, in their stead, have Nature furnish him with refreshment and music. This refreshment: the blooming meadows, the cool springs, the sweet incense of the prairie grass, the sensuous perfumes of the marshes—his music: the mild soughing of the winds, the piping of the quail, the drumming of the grouse, and the thousand and one sights and sounds of wild life, all of which will be seen by appreciative eyes, and heard by willing ears, as he wanders over the fields and through the moist valleys, interfered with by no sights or sounds of human activity.

The editor of this work is cognizant of the fact, that most excellent books can be obtained treating on the subject of game birds. But the majority of such works treat of them scientifically and ornithologically, and the average sportsman does not care to delve so deeply into the subject, tiring his brain over scientific terms. The editor desires, therefore, rather to speak of the birds as others speak, to see them as others see them, avoiding terms that will mystify or confuse his reader. As a hunter is born, not made, so only he can write of game birds who knows them, and loves their dwelling-places; for, unless he has watched them from birdlings to mature growth, he knows them not -simply *knows of them*. His experience must have been of years, and his study, not one of necessity; but the knowledge obtained, the result of favorable opportunities and through love for the sub-

ject. For one to become proficient in any calling, one must, as we say, inherit it; but even if not inherited, the passing years increase a man's ardor, and the amateur speedily becomes an expert, provided his heart is in what he does. These things were evident to the author when he first contemplated the publication of a work of this kind, and his aim and desire has been to give to the world a book simple in words, pure and elevating in tone, and so permeated with the invigorating recollections of days spent afield, that the reader can read, then lay aside, and at once recall just such scenes witnessed at some time of his life. It seemed, then, that it would be far better to enlist with him in the preparation of this book, men who were possessed of the requisite knowledge of the habits, resorts, and peculiarities of the different birds treated of, a knowledge obtained, *not* from books, but from years of actual experience in the field.

The writers selected are all known to the sporting world, and have been recognized for years as among the ablest in America, or in the world, on field sports. In this book, each writes of *his* bird, treating on the subject of his own selection—writing of birds studied and hunted for years. No one man has had the varied experience displayed in this book. Every hunter of experience has a choice of birds—some one bird he likes to hunt best. There is occasion for regret that many of the writers were necessarily restricted in space in preparing their articles. Were they not so restricted, it would have been necessary to publish two volumes, instead of one. There is a vein running through the many articles in this book, which commingles in free accord with the views of this writer—that is, the desire for the protection of game and the observance of existing game laws.

No experienced hunter can read this book without having brought to him scenes he has witnessed with

delight, and causing in his heart a secret longing for their return; while, by the inexperienced, especially by the young man, lessons can be learned instructive in all those secrets which make hunting a success, teaching him how to take advantage of the wary birds in all their wanderings, and instilling into his mind a love for out-door life, which will add to his strength and make the world the better for his living.

The supplemental chapter, "Greyhound Coursing," supplies a fund of information, and creates in the reader a desire to participate in this exciting sport. Lovers of the chase, of racing, of exhibitions of speed and endurance, can not fail to have their hearts throb faster, when they follow the writers in their glorious runs, and imagine, as they can not help imagining, that they are present and see the spirited running of the lithe and supple greyhounds, trained with all the skill and watchful care which characterizes the development of speed in the blooded horse. The hounds enter the contest leashed together, straining eyes and every nerve, anticipating the prey which may spring from the grass at any moment. The level prairie, the chase, the excitement, the successful pursuit, the cool October day, the thousands of enthusiastic spectators, the ground beautified and chastened by the presence of ladies and children, all flushed with excitement as one of the hounds, with a magnificent burst of speed, passes his competitor and seizes the fleet-footed ranger of the plains. Then the return, the crowning of the victor with a floral wreath by some fair lady, the ovation,—*all* these things cause one's blood to tingle, and we are willing, for the time, to lay aside our rods and guns, and with our wives and children enjoy sports so pure and exhilarating as these.

In the preparation of a work like this, one is placed under special obligations to many. I am thus indebted

to the writers who have so generously and brilliantly contributed to this volume, and especially to Dr. N. Rowe, of the *American Field*, the *Forest and Stream* Publishing Co., John M. Tracy, and J. B. Sword. I can assure the sporting fraternity that the generous reception with which my former book has been received, has touched me deeply; for, though thousands of copies have been sold, there has never as yet been an adverse criticism printed. Should this volume be accepted with equal friendliness, it will demonstrate to the world, as it has demonstrated to me, that my labors have not been in vain, and that we have helped to elevate field sports by producing works of so ennobling a character that a father is proud to place them in the hands of his sons, knowing that they contain pure and chaste thoughts, and are ripe with the fruits of manliness, unselfishness, kindness, and generosity.

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BAY-SNIPE, COOT, AND OTHER WILD FOWL SHOOTING ON THE ATLANTIC COAST.

By Isaac McLellan,
Author of "Poems of Rod and Gun," Etc.

AUTUMN is the sportsman's carnival. He then explores the woods, marshes, and meadows in pursuit of game, or lies in his ambush blind, with his fleet of decoys set out around him, awaiting the approach of hovering flocks of bay-snipe or soaring legions of wild fowl. October is brilliant with its autumnal scenes, and November is often attractive with panoramic glories of the declining year. In this fair season is commingled all the gorgeous combinations of the "Flowery Bow." The sky itself then seems to lose its heavenly azure, and the smoky vapor that then ascends its domes and reposes in its cerulean chambers seems to have caught the variegated hues of the emblazoned earth beneath. Every mountain pool and lonely pond, every brimming river and lapping brook, seem tinged with hues borrowed from reflected wood or sailing cloud. In the dim depths of forests, the pine, fir, spruce, and other evergreens may still retain their verdure, the wild grape-vines and ivies have but partially lost their greenness, but elsewhere the eye is dazzled with the tintings of scarlet and purple, of orange and of gold. And these rich blendings of color in the thick drapery of the woodlands is very

lovely, whether it is tossed by the crisp mountain breeze or sleeps motionless in a universal calm, so profound that no sound is audible, save, perhaps,

> "The sound of nutshells by the squirrel dropped
> From some tall beech, fast falling thro' the leaves."

To all lovers of Nature, these royal autumnal scenes are full of enchantment. The bright river, shining in the mid-day light, and belted in with its girdle of orange, purple, and scarlet foliage, painted by the lavish brush of Autumn, seems to the eye like a mirror of silver set in a frame of clouded gold, studded with effulgent brilliants. Above, leaning against the sky, the rough brown hosts of pine-trees shoot upward their lofty shafts and heavy mass of umbrage, while beneath the ground is moist and russet-stained with the accumulated needles of ages. As the sun shoots its level rays through the open glades and vistas of the wood, it enkindles the myriad sparkles of dew that glisten on grass and thicket. The gossamer feather of the thistle, the flaky down of the milk-weed, and the fine-spun thread of the spider's web, extended from tree to tree, or floating loose in air, are then all strung with dewy beads of pearls and lucent gems. From tree-top to tree-top, the gossiping blue jays fly merrily past, as if hastening to circulate the morning news; and from grove to grove the cawing crows flap their black pinions, clamoring to their mates. The golden robins, admonished by the chilly airs of the season, are piping their melodious notes in the sunny pastures, as if sounding the warning notes for the flocks to collect for their annual migration.

Along the breezy surface of rivers, the blue-winged teal and the painted wood-duck are swimming, or dressing their plumage, or diving beneath the surface in joyous frolic. At times the hollow "honk" of the wild goose will resound like a trumpet high in air, and the

melancholy wail of the speckled loon will float by with musical cadence. Anon a riotous brook of wild ducks will raise their scolding chatter; and anon a frightened rabbit will scurry along with nimble leaps, or, sitting erect on its haunches, will pause to gaze at the passer-by. Anon a merry old squirrel will scamper up the trunk of a tree, or, perched upon some bending twig, will chatter to his mates, or nibble the hickory-nut held by its little furry paws. These fair scenes are familiar to us all, and it is pleasing to recognize them pictured in verse.

'Tis autumn time--
The golden, mellow autumn time,
When skies are radiant, rich and warm,
The air delicious with its balm,
With laden branch and leafy spray,
Bright-colored by November day,
Magnificent, rare autumn time;
With honeyed fruits and leaves embrowned,
And gay blooms o'er thy forehead bound,
With scarlet vine-leaves crowned;
All day the rosy-cinctured hours
Prolong, in the grand forest bowers,
Their festival of fruits and flowers,
A carnival sublime;
And now fowlers at the shore
The marsh, the cove, the bay explore,
So, hid in grass or yellow reed,
Seek out the haunts where wild fowl feed.

The noblest fowl, and the one that affords the best sport along our coast-line, is the brant. It does not pass into fresh bays or brackish rivers, but confines itself to the sea-board and to salt waters, where it finds its natural food. In the spring it is abundant along the coast, when migrating to northern feeding-grounds, but its stay is then very brief.

In the fall season it makes its welcome appearance in the bays of Long Island and Jersey, below Barnegat Inlet, and the birds are there killed in great numbers.

They abound on the eastern coast of Virginia, and there, we think, are to be found the best places for brant-shooting on the coast.

We have seldom seen them on the New England shores, when engaged in coot-shooting and we presume they do not follow that line of coast, but pass far out at sea, and first fall in with the land on the south side of Long Island, and there stop for rest and food. In former years, they were quite abundant at Montauk, and in Gardiner's Bay, on the east part of Long Island, but now they are much more scarce. They are shy of passing over a point of land, so that a battery-gunner, concealed in his small boat, far out from shore, and surrounded by decoys, has great advantage over the fowler who shoots from shore. It is a bird that easily falls to shot, and does not escape by diving, or it does not plunge for food, feeding on bars at low water on a broad-leaved plant called the sea-cabbage. The first flocks to arrive remain but a few days, and then, collected in large flocks, rise high in air, and after describing wide aerial circuits, they start out in a direct course over the sea, avoiding all projecting points, and traveling night and day. They are soon succeeded by other flocks, which remain until the severe weather of December compels them to a southern flight. The brant-geese are more wary than the Canada geese, and are shy of approaching the ambushed gunner. They will often, however, alight beyond the decoys, and then slowly swim into the wooden flock, mistaking them for their feathered brethren. A favorite way to kill them is to have a boat like box on some open sand-bar which the fowl frequent, and the unsuspecting birds fall an easy prey. The best location for the sport that we know of is on the eastern coast of Virginia, in the "broad waters" between the outlying sandy islands and the main-land. We have

passed several seasons there on the main opposite Cobb's Island, where we found the bay-snipe shooting most excellent, especially for the big siche-bill curlews. On those "broad waters," during the summer months, numerous tree-blinds are planted in the water by the fowlers, and between these they hide themselves and boats until the brant arrive, late in the season. These blinds are formed of small cedar-trees, stuck into the soft mud of the bottom, and make with their bushy tops a thick screen some five feet above the water. Numerous decoys are anchored all around these blinds; the gunners take position in the boats, the hovering flocks approach the snare, the guns explode, and the surface is overspread with the slain. These are quickly gathered up, the guns reloaded, and all is ready for another flock. The victims are easily disabled, and you are sure to retrieve with your boat all that you shoot down. The black duck (*Anas obscura*) also is abundant at those places, as indeed it is along the whole coast from Montauk to Hatteras. Though it frequents salt bays and inlets, it seems also to be fond of fresh waters, and is found in swamps, marshes, ice-fields, and the margins of rivers. Though called the black duck, that is a misnomer; for the black duck of science is the spectacle-duck, a species of coot (*Fuligula perspiculata*), and is properly the dusky duck. We have enjoyed much better bay-snipe shooting on the eastern peninsula of Virginia than on Long Island, New Jersey, or North Carolina. The scenery on the Chesapeake Bay side is very lovely, and we have never seen more picturesque spots than the old plantation sites along the bay shore; there green slopes dip down into the crystal-clear water; noble trees droop their greenery of foliage, engarlanded with the trailing vines of wild grape, woodbine, ivy, and the splendid trumpet-flower. Broad plantations outstretch for miles their fruitful acres of

corn and grain, and the dingy white house of the planter gleams through its bower of fruit-trees, twinkling amid the embowering elms, locusts, and oaks. There the mocking-bird builds and sings and other sweet songsters assemble, and every stubble-field repeats the soft whistle of the quail; but there pervades the blight of malaria; but on the sea-coast side it is much healthier, where the salt breeze, blowing in fresh from the Atlantic, fills the lungs with healthful inspiration. In such latter place the bay-snipe shooting can not be surpassed, and we have never seen the curlew in such great numbers, while the willet, plover, yellow-leg, and dowitch are ever abundant. These haunt the meadow-lands that line the shore, and the boundless acres of salt marshes, intersected with tidal creeks, between the main-land and the sea; there also resort the ducks in late fall, and a good boat, good gun, and good aim are all that is requisite for good and ample enjoyment. We have found the broad-bill (blue-bill) very numerous in the lower parts of Chesapeake Bay, where they are called "raft-duck." These fowls pass the nights on the flats, in large flocks, and seldom resort to salt meadows. Great havoc is made among them by batteries, and we rejoice that the use of these destructive machines are prohibited in many places. Of all wild fowl, the most valued is the canvas-back, though we think them not superior to their congener, the red-head. The two fowl closely resemble each other in size and plumage, and their food is identical, viz., the valisneria, or duck-weed. They are very plentiful in North Carolina waters, but the best ground for them seems to be the upper waters of the Chesapeake. They arrive there about the middle of November, and are then in poor condition after their long flight from the North; but soon after feeding on the succulent grasses, they acquire the delicious flavor which makes them world-renowned. At such places the

canvas-back and broad-bill dive to the bottom and tear up the roots of the grasses, while the red-heads and widgeons feed on the leaves that rise to the surface. The widgeon (bald-pate) is a regular thief, and thieves at the expense of the canvas-back, snatching the treasure from the bill of the latter as it brings it to the surface. The Chesapeake is their chosen place of rest and pasture.

> By myriads there the wild fowl come
> To taste the rich, delicious fare;
> The red-head and the canvas-back,
> The widgeon with his plumage rare,
> The ruddy duck, the buffle-head,
> The broad-bill, and the Canada goose,
> Hovering o'er shoal or cove
> Their winnowing pinions to unloose.

The best points in Long Island for geese, brant-duck, and bay-snipe shooting are at the Great South Bay, the East Bay, and Shinnecod Bay, and at the latter location we have pleasantly passed several successive seasons, enjoying excellent sport. It is a bay of only eight miles in extent, and the points are all easily accessible; and when the valisneria (duck-grass) is abundant, the shooting for duck and snipe is very good. In former years, Great South Bay was, and still is, a favorite resort for wild fowl shooters, and there often came "Cypress, Jr." (Hawes), W. H. Herbert, and others of sporting celebrity, though we think that Frank Forester preferred the sport to be had at Barnegat Bay, at old John Maxon's, and there he advised us to try it, which we did for several years, with ample pleasure and success. The bay-snipe, by their countless numbers, afford rare sport to the bay-man and amateur gunner in July, August, September, and October, throughout our great coast-line from Cape Cod to Cape May. Spring shooting is now properly prohibited by law. In their fall migrations, they turn aside from the open sea to frequent the vari-

ous bays, marshes, and mud-flats of Long Island and New Jersey, where they enjoy their natural, abundant food; and there the gunners, securely hid in ambush, await their approach, and greatly thin out the flocks. These migratory tribes are very diverse in their cries, shapes, and color, and usually fly in separate flocks.

The splendid golden plovers, however, do not resort to these bays, or consort with the bay-birds, but as their natural feast consists of insects, grasshoppers, crickets, etc., they frequent and feed upon upland pastures, and there only are found. In years past, they were found in countless numbers over the grassy slopes of Montauk Point and the hill-sides of Gardiner's Island, and there for years we successfully interviewed them; but in later years, from some unknown cause, they have forsaken their old haunts, and flown to "fresh fields and pastures new." In the above-mentioned bay they still are found in large, though diminished, flocks; and we think that, warned by their destruction in those bays, they pursue their southward course far out to sea, not pausing by the way. We have been told by fishermen that they often have seen their great flocks over the ocean, far from land. In pursuit of them, the gunners issue forth when the tides are out, secreting themselves in grass-dressed boats, or amidst the sedge-grass, and there await the flood-tides, which drive the birds from the marshes, creeks, and mud-flats, and in their passage they are readily lured by the wooden stools and imitative whistles of the sportsman, and, so deceived, they hover and alight, and become an easy prey to the destroyer. It is usual to make the blind at the edge of a pond or creek, and there set out their stools, with long legs, in the water, where they will make a more conspicuous show than if planted on a mud-flat on the short grass of the marshes; when the birds, such as the varieties of curlew, martin, willet,

brant-bird, yellow-shank, robin-snipe, dawitch, kreekers, sanderlings, ox-eyes, ring-neck, etc., etc., rise from their submerged feeding-grounds, they will pass through the various leads and thoroughfares in great numbers, and, enticed by the sight of the stools and the simulated whistles of the gunners, they will approach, and, hovering, will alight among or near the decoys, and receive the deadly shot, after returning to their crippled and fluttering mates, and so falling to a repeated volley of No. 10 pellets. The black-breast plovers arrive here in May from their winter quarters in the South, and after delaying for a few days on the bars, beaches, and uplands, they leave in a body for the North, where the young broods are hatched and raised, and in the months of August and September they return to us again, reinforced by their now well-grown offspring. Though shy, they are enticed within shot by the decoys, and their imitated plaintive notes. In autumn they are distributed along the coast, subsisting on minute shell-fish and marine insects, on which fare they become fat. They remain with us until September, when they begin to pass southward, their migrating course extending to the southernmost extremity of the Union. The brant-bird, which we have often seen mixed with the black-breast flocks, is very prettily marked; mingling with its plumage are white, black, reddish-brown, and blackish-brown feathers. It is commonly known as the "horse-foot snipe," from its feeding on the spawn of the king-crab, or horse-foot, as it is termed. It arrives on the coast early in May, from the South, and leaves for its breeding-place in the North by the end of May. It returns to the bays of Jersey and Long Island in September, where it remains until late in autumn. On the New England coast, we have recognized it chiefly under the name of "turn-stone," from its habit of turning the

pebbles of the beach in search of food. In its ways it is rather solitary, and is seen singly or in pairs only, skimming the beach in search of marine insects and minute shell-fish. It is then in plump condition, and considered a delicacy. In the spring it moves with the black-breast flocks, but at other seasons it does not seem to be gathered in numbers with other migratory birds. The most numerous fowl, perhaps, on our coast are the various tribes of coot, old squaws, and shell-drake, and there should be no restriction on the allowed time for shooting. The laws of New York have provided that no geese, black duck, shell-drake, coot, or old squaws should be killed on Long Island in certain prescribed months; but there should be nothing to forbid the killing of these last-mentioned fowl, as they are not valued for food or market on Long Island or Jersey; they afford good sport, and it should be left discretionary with sportsmen to kill or spare them. There is no law in New England placing any such prohibitions on shooting them, and nearly all the fowl-shooting on that coast consists of coot, old squaws, shell-drake, and loon. We have for years enjoyed that sport at some of the best points from Maine to Seconnet Point, Rhode Island, and always found it to be good. It is followed in Massachusetts Bay by hundreds and thousands of gunners, with success and satisfaction. But there these fowl are held in fair estimation for the table, and fowlers come from remote places in the interior to favorite locations on the coast to enjoy their annual sport. Wherever there is a jutting point or head-land, with a reef of outlying rocks projecting into the sea, there along the extended coast will be seen long lines of the fowlers' boats, tossing on the waves. At some such point we have seen a fleet of from ten to fifty "dories" strung out and ready for the flight of the coot. There are coot of many varieties: old

squaws, shell-drake, or loon are the chief and almost the only game; for seldom does a brant, broad-bill, or black duck cross that dangerous line of boats.

The coot and old squaws are in myriads all along the coast, and we have seen acres of them in sailing, late in the fall, from the mouth of the Chesapeake to York River, a distance of 100 or more miles. The velvet duck (*Fuligula fusca*), or white-wing coot, is in flesh rather tough and fishy, and is so hard to kill that its slaughter is considered by fowlers a sure test of skill. It feeds on shell-fish, especially the scollop. When migrating South, it performs its long journey from its summer breeding-place in perfect silence. It is a heavy-bushed bird, and well supplied with down, and when in full plumage a heavy chain of shot is requisite to bring them low. The surf or spectacle duck breeds from Labrador northward. Its flesh is coarse and fishy. It is peculiar to America, and its life is spent in the bays and on the shores of the sea. Its food consists of those small bivalve shell-fish, the spoat-fish and others, that lie in the sand near the surface. For these they dive constantly, seldom visiting the salt marshes. They often remain with us in the North during the winter months. They are very shy birds, and not easily approached by boat. In these waters are also very abundant the long-tailed duck, commonly called the old squaw or old wife, which we hear along the shores repeating their sonorous cry of "South, south, southerly," by which name they are known along the southern coast. On the New England coast they are called the "quandy." This bird is the latest to leave their remote northern feeding-grounds. Protected by its thick, downy plumage, it lingers long among the ice-fields of the Arctic, till at last compelled to seek its food in a milder region. They come in large flocks, but soon separate in small flocks, and through the winter

frequent the whole coast. It is expert in diving, and goes under "shuts the door" so quickly that it is hard to shoot. Its flesh is tough and fishy, like that of the coot. It accompanies the coot in its migrations, and its food and habits are similar. Wherever there is an abundance of small clams and mussels, there the old squaws select their feeding-places. They remain with us till the weather is severe enough to form ice, and so prevent their getting any more food. Long Island Sound abounds with them, where long lines of boats are ranged for their destruction; but their chief flight extends along the open sea-coast, and they may be seen at all times skimming across the ocean waves or winging high in air their ceaseless flight. Sometimes they will pass in wavy, wide, long lines, like an immense undulating serpent, and at other times passing on in dense phalanx and solid columns, like an immense army. Neither the broad-bills (scaup-duck) nor the brant seem to join in their flight. In numbers the coot and old squaw tribes seem to be countless, exceeding any species of fowl that sweep the air. They have these in the North, on sandy islands, as well as the curlew and others of the snipe tribe, where they find their food in the salt deeps, and deposit their eggs in the sand, and these find deadly foes in the provincial poachers, who rob their nests of the eggs without remorse. These men land on the sandy islands at sundown, and then trample all over the sands, destroying all eggs that cover the ground, and on the following morning they revisit the spot and collect all the fresh-laid eggs, with which they load their small vessels, and so proceed with their plunder to Boston or other city markets. The brant and geese, however, are more wary, do not resort to those sandy islands, but retire to inaccessible swamps and marshes, where they deposit their eggs and raise their young in perfect

security, beyond the reach of white poacher or Indian robber. The Canadian laws prohibit all such devastations, but the enactments are easily evaded. It is said that more fowls are thus destroyed than by the guns of all the fowlers of the coast.

In New England there is no sporting-club to monopolize the ground and maintain exclusive privileges. The coot-shooting is free to all, and old ocean opens wide its gates, and with its rolling billows invites the daring gunner to its breast. There is much real hardship, and some spice of danger, in the sport, that is unknown to the shooter in the sheltered bays of Long Island, the waters of Barnegat in Jersey, or the shoal creeks and shallows of Carrituck Sound. The coot-shooter has to dare the combing breakers ready to engulf, the sharp and hidden rocks eager to impale, and the sudden and violent gales, sufficient to sweep the dancing skiff far away from friendly shore to the pitiless wastes of ocean. We have had many a desperate struggle against wind and tide, when caught out a mile at sea in our diminutive craft, by a sudden gale blowing from the shore, and we have seen hair-breadth escapes from certain drowning among the venturous coot-shooters. There are many capital points for the shooting on that coast, the best of which are the Boarshead, at Hampton, N. H.; Cohasset Rocks, Scituate Harbor, Brant Rock, Marshfield, and Manamet Point, at the mouth of Plymouth Bay. We have had many a good day's sport at each of these places, for at them all, the fowl-flight is plentiful, and the fishing unsurpassed. It is a rule that the first boat in early morning to reach the shooting-ground shall have the first choice of place; and sometimes the sportsman most eager for the sport will anchor his boat, in the darkness, off the outer rock of the reef, and wrapping himself close in his shooting-coat, lie down and sleep till awakened by the dawn

or by succeeding boats; and such has been our own not unfrequent experience. If the wind and weather be calm and adverse, there will probably be but a small flight of fowl; but if a light or a smart breeze blows from the eastward, then "look out to the eastward." The first fifteen or twenty boats to arrive anchor and set out decoys, and then form a curved line from the outer rock, at about gunshot distance from each other. Those who come later form a second line, anchored some thirty rods in rear of the former; and all the latest comers, who have lingered too long in bed or at breakfast, form a straggling third line in rear of all, and are content to open fire upon the broken flocks that have escaped through the two front lines, and ofttimes they are rewarded in picking up the cripples. On a blowy day, with a rough sea running, these third-line laggards do a profitable business in gathering up the killed and wounded. These coot shooters form a mixed and curious assemblage. Some of them are city-bred, fresh from the wharf and warehouse, rigged out in the most correct sporting-garb, and armed in the best fashion. Then there are rural gunners from the far-back-in woods, provided with squirrel-guns, and using only 3 B shot, instead of No. 2 and 3. Then come the native gunners, old fellows who have followed the sport at the shore where they reside for half a century or more. We have known some of them, venerable with the frosts of eighty years, yet strong enough to pull a boat or thin a flock, using only their ancient muskets. In a favorable day for the flight, it is exciting to take one's stand on a bluff and witness the sport. It is like overlooking a battle-field, with constant roar and flash of guns. A light breeze, then, perhaps, blows from the northeast, just sufficient to ruffle the waves, without stirring them to anger. The rolling surge frets and foams against the weed-draped rocks and the yellow sands of the shore, where the dark

pines and yellowing oaks cast their shadows. Above spreads the blue canopy of sky, hazy with the vapors of Indian summer. Far away spreads old ocean's gray and melancholy waste, dotted here and there with snowy sail or smoking steamer; while beneath you lies the little fleet of boats, in constant smoke, and, as the flocks of fowl pass over them, we might celebrate the scene and the coot in verse, thus:

> High, high in upper air they rise,
> Their dark forms melting in the skies;
> Seaward, in solid, compact mass,
> The flapping squadrons onward pass;
> And now they skim the frothy brine,
> In lengthen'd file, in wedge-like line,
> Ne'er sweeping over land or bar,
> But skirting headlands high and far.

Along the rocky shores of Massachusetts Bay, crowned with bowery woodlands, bordered in vast acres of salt marshes, and washed by the salty tides of the bay, lies the little town of Marshfield, famous as the chosen and last home of Daniel Webster. Many years since, charmed with the location, he purchased an old farm-house and a few acres of land, near the marshes and the shore, where the Green River debouches into ocean, and here he passed many happy years of life, in a haven where he could retire from the bustle of the law and the distractions of politics, and refresh himself with the tranquil pleasures of rural life and the exciting delights of fishing, fowling for coot, and bay-snipe shooting. It was our good fortune to be established, through his courtesy and kindness, in his adjoining farm-house, and for some three years of residence there we had good opportunity to enjoy the sports of marsh and ocean, and the much greater pleasure of seeing constantly the great statesman. Brant Rock, not far from his home, was a famous point for fishing, and for some years he might be found

in the line of boats trying his hand at shooting; but his greater pleasure, especially in later years, was to sail out in his little sloop and enjoy the sport of cod and haddock fishing. He was ever a generous and beloved landlord among his dependents, and the kindest of parents, ever delighted to have his sons with him, on marshes, over the farm, or in the boat. The elder one, Fletcher, a colonel in a Union regiment, fell in battle during the late war, and the youngest, Major Edward, died of disease during the Mexican War. It was a sorrowful day when the remains of the statesman were interred, on a hill-side overlooking the ocean and the meadows.

THE WOODCOCK.

By William Jarvis ("Mont Clare").

IN the list of birds pursued with dog and gun, there is one that has a lasting claim upon the affections of a sportsman, both on account of its beauty and the mystery that surrounds its ways; a bird of mighty wanderings and daily rest; a bird with eyes large, dark, and deep, in whose depths the glories of an autumnal sky and landscape are reflected in miniature; a bird with the magic power to turn its admirer from all other feathered game, if once he hears the whistle of its wings or sees its form glide stealthily down the glade.

Its plumage above is mottled with rufous, slate, and black, the first two colors softly blending upon the sides of the neck, while below, upon the shapely breast, there is a tinge of pink, which changes to a rufous toward the wings and thighs. This color—full upon the breast of a perfect-plumaged bird, fading away as it nears the tail to the shade of a bit of sedge—reminds one of the reflection of an October sunset. Its legs are of moderate length, delicate in their molding, and flesh-tinted; the toes are long and slender; its bill dark in color and very long, and the full dark eyes, set quite to the top of the head, that it may more safely feed without injury to its eyesight, give to this bird a most singular appearance. Its length is about eleven inches, and its weight from five to eight ounces, the female generally being the larger. Such is

the woodcock, a bird once known, never to be forgotten.

It has, too, a claim upon the epicure as well as the sportsman, and, from those days when the Pontine marshes furnished woodcock in such numbers that the Romans feasted upon their tongues until to-day, this bird has been regarded as one of the daintiest morsels ever tasted by man.

Of woodcock we have but one variety, inhabiting Eastern North America, and breeding in various sections of the United States and Provinces, called by ornithologists *Philohela minor*, to distinguish it in a scientific manner from its cousin, the woodcock of Europe, which differs from ours in shape of wings and general markings, being less beautiful in coloring, and in size a third larger. Wherever the woodcock may be found, it is a migratory bird, although in the most southern of its breeding-grounds its migrations are of short duration. It is something of a Bohemian in its ways, bound to live well for the day, or rather the night; no matter for the morrow; governed in its choice of home by no provincial laws, but by the climate and the food which it loves so well; fearing the cold, the sleet, and the snows, and altogether being a lover of the sunny side of life.

The woodcock of the Northern States is the woodcock of the Southern — no difference in its markings, no difference in its size, nor in the flavor of its flesh.

The bobolink of New England is the reed bird of the Pennsylvania marshes, the rice-bird of the South; its food varies, and so does its flavor.

The ruffed grouse in certain winter months feeds upon the buds of the birch, and its flesh at such times is bitter to the taste, and unfit for food. The canvas-back searches for the wild celery, revels in its fragrance, and then furnishes to the epicure a far more delicate viand

than at other times. But the woodcock, no matter where it wings its way, in all of the many sections in which it may be found, at various seasons legitimate for shooting, is much the same sort of bird, and woodcock-shooting

WOODCOCK.—Philohela minor.

is much the same sort of sport throughout the length and breadth of the land; yet no other in the list of game birds is so little understood by mankind in general; no other has so wrecked the many theories which from time to time have been advanced concerning its modes of life, and no other has been subject to such relentless persecution.

In the dells and covers where woodcock breed, they are birds of curious ways, and it is in such places, with no evil intent in one's heart, that he can best learn their nature, and get at those secrets of their forest lives which are beyond his reach when, with dog and gun, he beats the covers in autumn months.

The arrival of woodcock upon their breeding-grounds varies with the season and the sections of country through which they scatter. They leave their winter resorts, where for a short time they have enjoyed a southern sun, and commence their northward pilgrimage late in January or early in February, advancing with the spring-tide, until they find grounds suited to their habits. In their most southern grounds they breed as early as the last of February, and in their more northern as late as April or May, depending upon the season.

Their breeding in the Southern States is rare, if the season be favorable for early migration, as they prefer grounds farther north; but the season being cold and backward, some make short migrations, and go at once to breeding. Again, there may be a few broods raised near their winter habitat, on account of the inability of the old birds to accompany their tribe; so everywhere may the woodcock be considered a migratory bird, as the isolated cases of their breeding in the far South are the exceptions.

In sections where the woodcock breed as early as February, they may rear a second brood; but in their northern homes they do not, unless their first nesting is destroyed, when they go to work at once to repair the injury.

Usually reaching the Middle States in March, the New England States in April, this desire to return so early to their breeding-grounds often meets with a cold reception. The great storm of March, 1888, was, no doubt, the shroud of many a woodcock.

When first the bluebirds twitter in the orchards and the robins sing their morning songs, then may we look for the coming of the woodcock; for the deep snows of our northern clime have nearly gone, and the warm rains have swelled the rills to rivers and moistened the loam along their banks.

Although it may freeze somewhat at night in the more open glades, there are many streams flowing among the hills and winding through the sheltered lowlands where Jack Frost has performed his last work for the winter gone.

Here upon these banks, softened by the sun's warm rays, woodcock feed, and here, later on, amid the alder-covered environs and down in the bottom-lands, they nest and rear their broods.

Although they are well-known lovers of fens and alder-glades, and generally nest in such places—doubtless from the fact of its being much easier to feed their young—still an occasional pair, wiser, perhaps, than their generation, or more willing to work for the support of their family, will select some spot high and dry, even though quite distant from their feeding-grounds; and whatever the labor, they are well repaid, since there is not the danger from heavy rains that continually threatens the lower breeding-grounds.

The woodcock, unlike the ruffed grouse, is satisfied with a single mate, the choice being made in the course of their flight, or just before setting out on their northward journey; for soon after their arrival, the weather being propitious, they commence a skilled and careful inspection of the breeding-grounds, to find a suitable nesting-place. This skill consists not in building—for a woodcock's nest is rather a poor specimen of bird architecture—but in selecting some spot where little effort is required to construct a nest, and where the immediate

surroundings are such that there is nothing to distinguish it. In this nest, built among a few loose twigs and leaves, or, perhaps, in a slight depression amid a bunch of withered grass, the eggs are laid. They are four in number, quite round in form, of a dull clay-color, covered with brownish spots, and in size corresponding to those of the pigeon.

The male bird, no doubt, assists his mate in incubation, since they are such voracious feeders that a great deal of time must be consumed in obtaining food; and as they feed in the cool of the early evening and morning, the eggs would soon become chilled unless protected.

During this period, which is about three weeks, the sitting bird is quite easy to approach, as she seems to know that silence is her best protection, and indeed it is, for the coloring of her plumage so blends with the surroundings that he must have sharp eyes to find the nest which she so silently protects.

The young being hatched, a transformation scene takes place, for then, especially at eventide and early morning, all is bustle and activity, the parent birds having a busy time in caring for their little family, which is more helpless than that of the grouse or the quail, and sometimes, before the fledgelings are able to fly, have to be carried from one feeding-ground to another.

It is stated by some authorities that the young are carried upon the back of the parent bird, clinging there with bill and toes; again, that they are carried between the thighs, being held there partly by the aid of the bill and the tail; the position of the bill, pointed downward during flight, unless distinctly seen, would tend to convey this idea. I have never seen the young carried in either of these ways, but have seen them transported from place to place, grasped by the long, slender toes of the old bird and drawn up closely to the body.

The young woodcock, when first hatched, very much resemble bantam chicks, with the exception of their eyes and bills, although even in these respects the difference is not marked.

The parent birds are very solicitous for their little ones, and when their domain is encroached upon, endeavor by all the arts known to bird-land to attract attention to themselves, with a warning to their downy chicks to drop silently and closely to the ground or to scatter in different directions.

How her cry causes the little ones to disappear upon an approach! How she flutters and feigns to be lame and wounded, leading you a merry chase, if you will only follow, anywhere, everywhere, through the glades, to guard against any possible danger to her family!

She will lead you a winding course, and then you see her no more, for having successfully decoyed you, she is off on pinions swift, noiseless, and strong from maternal love. Taking a wide circle in her flight, she returns to the vicinity of her young, and dropping quietly to the ground, listens a little for the step of her pursuer; all is still; her ruse has been successful; not a sound or movement, save here and there the song of some forest thrush or sparrow, or the hopping of the tiny wren from bough to bough, either of which contains no terrors for her little ones, who are listening for that call of safety which never yet deceived them.

The mother's large dark eyes gleam with eagerness, as her low, guttural "peek, peek, peek" draws forth the fainter answers from her little ones, that, rising slowly from the ground, or appearing from under leaf or twig, rush with flapping wings to meet their mother, who, with a tender care that would melt a poacher's heart, guides her fledgelings through all the dangers that beset their

paths by day, and when the sun has gone from sight, directs them through the pleasures of the night.

Woodcock, in their intercourse with each other, display none of that pugnacious spirit possessed by the quail and grouse, and are altogether more loving in their ways, and seemingly better satisfied with their surroundings.

It is during the warm spring evenings that one may hear, by visiting the breeding-grounds, the song of the woodcock; and the love-notes of the male, though not so soft as those of the thrush, are far sweeter than the strains of many a well-reputed songster, doubtless sounding as sweet to his lady-bird down in the ferns as any serenade ever sung by ardent lover.

With guttural prelude to his song while on the ground, he circles upward in his flight through the twilight, till, lost to sight, his notes are heard high in the air, not unlike those of a night hawk; but it is in his downward flight that the full melody of his love-song is heard, as he approaches the female who is awaiting him; resting a few moments, he repeats his upward flight and song, and at intervals repeats this performance until darkness has shut out the last glimmer of the daylight. Who would suppose that this bird, indifferent as he seems in the day-time to all sentiment, could sing such love-songs in the gloaming?

There is no bird family of all our fields and forests so peculiar in its ways, or any whose ways are so hard to study, and consequently so little understood. Woodcock do not fly about during the day for either food or pleasure, rarely taking wing unless disturbed, seeking rest and quiet all day long away from human eyes; but when the sun has set, and most good birds have gone to bed, they start out for their feeding-ground.

They seem to know by intuition what loam contains

the fattest, freshest worms, what bog contains the choicest loam, and by their borings leave for us, otherwise unsophisticated in woodcock logic, indications of their presence.

I know of bogs, meadows, fens, and alder-covers that topographically, and from all evidence gained by man in general, are seemingly as worthy of a woodcock's choice as those wherein they dwell and feed, but, for all that, are never inhabited by these long-billed birds. No matter how favorable such grounds may seem to the casual observer, they contain none of the worms and larvæ upon which woodcock feed; and such grounds, upon a careful examination, will be found to be either sandy or so hard that woodcock supplies can not exist, or else sour and rank, as the growth of grass may indicate. I know of a favorite cover, through which a tiny brook picks its course, whose waters are strongly tainted with iron, and yet woodcock bore upon its banks, and are amply rewarded for their labors; possibly they are invalids, who go there for treatment; if so, they are fortunate in having mineral springs so easy of access.

Woodcock have no choice as to the locality of their feeding-grounds, if only the proper food may be found, and in many a country village there are rich vegetable gardens which furnish fine feasts to wise old woodcock, who do not hesitate to take advantage of the dusk to visit them, and whose only danger at such times is from the telegraph wires or from the prowling house-cat.

Often, when the feeding-ground is quite distant from suitable covers, the birds may be seen at dusk, rising spirit-like from the deep gloom of the woods, and, darting athwart the sky, dropping to the low, wet meadows, bogs, and brook-sides beyond.

They well know where to find the proper food, how to get it when found, and the exact moment in which to

present their bills—they are long ones, too—for payment.

It must not be understood that woodcock never feed between the hours of dawn and sunset, for I have caught them at their borings where a dark morass, studded with pools, each bordered with deep, rich loam, furnished the choicest food, and where the alders were so thick that the sunlight could not reach the ground beneath, and low upon the earth all was dark and still, save the hum of insects and the purling of the brook. Again, one day in early autumn, I came upon a woodcock in a meadow corn-field. I watched him for some time probing the soft, moist soil, until, either becoming weary in well-doing or suspicious of my presence, he walked slowly away, with bobbing head, from his last feast, for I then flushed and shot him. And again, one dark, rainy morning in July, about 8 o'clock, as I was driving along a road which had recently been repaired from the rich soil of a neighboring alder-flat, a woodcock flushed in front of me, and then another, and another, and another. As soon as possible I stopped my horse, and again saw them, only a few rods distant, busily feeding; punch, push, probe, pull, and worm after worm, brought toward the surface by the warm rain, was drawn from the soft road, not by suction, but by the good muscular efforts of those long bills. Driving on, they flushed again; but loath to leave such a delicious breakfast, they would not take to the covers, and stopping, feeding, flushing, for more than fifty rods, that quartette of woodcock kept the highway until there were open fields upon either side of them, when, with a curve in their flight, they turned back and disappeared in the cover.

Curious birds are they, forever presenting to him who studies their modes of life new phases of character. Their complete history has never yet been written.

I have often pictured them upon stormy nights feeding beneath the cover of overhanging tree-lined banks, or in open marsh and fen, and wondered if their actions were as solemn then as in the daylight. It must be sad work in such weather, indeed almost funereal, and the joy, like that of many a human life, be the anticipation of the coming rest.

In festal moods, no doubt they pass many a night in revelry, by the margin of some favorite pool, whose mirrored surface reflects the star-lit zenith, with the moon high above for a chandelier, and the wind-anthems through the tree-tops for music. Perhaps, too, they have some knowledge of astronomy, understand the twinkling of the stars, study the signs of the zodiac, thereby learning when to time their flights, and placing great reliance upon the moon's phases, and the tale which she tells them, as they watch her course; for they take their migratory flights by the pale light of the moon, rather than by the bright rays of the mid-day sun.

What other of our upland game birds enjoys such nightly revels? The upland plover flies by night, and its plaintive call, half sad, half glad, may be heard wavering upon the evening air; but it feeds by day, and does not, like the woodcock, indulge in nocturnal feasts.

Woodcock are a riddle to the sportsman, who knows them best, while to those without the pale of field-sports they are known only as their name is read upon some tempting menu, or as they are brought to the table, served with highest culinary skill.

To him who, in the early summer, with rod in hand, follows some trout-brook as it dashes down from among the hills and out through the interval, they often, for an instant, show their mottled plumage ere they whistle from sight in the thick, green foliage, and leave him gazing with eager eyes at "what might have been."

To the rustic lad, and the farmer, upon whose land, among the glades and swamps, they breed, they are unseen, unknown, or, if seen, known only as "whistling snipe," "timber doodles," or by some other such provincial name; and should one make an inquiry for woodcock, he would probably be directed to the old trees in the orchard or upon the hill-top, but almost never to the proper covers; for the farmer is not as familiar with these bird-tenants of his freehold as with the quail, the ruffed grouse, and many others of the feathered tribe who encroach upon his domain.

Sometimes in the early summer mornings, as he mows the swale, they spring from before him, and are seen only for an instant ere they drop farther down among the low-grown willows, leaving him to wonder whether he saw a bird or spirit; and I myself often wonder that it is not the spirits of woodcock only that are seen, considering the warfare that has been waged upon the tribe for so many years, in season and out of season north, south, east, and west, from the rising to the setting of the sun, and indeed from the setting to the rising again by that execrable practice of fire-hunting practiced in some sections of the South. Truly, their time of peace is very limited. Permitted by law, in some States, to be shot before they are fairly fledged, they know no safety from that time on until they once more return to their breeding-places, and for a few weeks out of the fifty-two are granted a short respite during their nesting and hatching.

Summer cock-shooting must be everywhere abolished, to save the tribe, already becoming scarce in many sections which formerly held them in great numbers. It is true that, owing to the increase in population, large tracts of swamps, rich with the best of soil, have been cleared, drained, and reclaimed; and now the field-sparrow sings

and nests where woodcock used to breed and furnish shooting.

Again, as woodcock have decreased, the men who shoot have increased, and just so much more should their intelligent protection be enforced. As for summer shooting, it is cruel and wrong, both in theory and practice, and no manner of logic can make it right.

It is strange that the selfish pleadings of a few should have the power to enact laws permitting summer shooting; or, if enacted in times past, when it seemed folly to be wise, should have sufficient force to overrule all those who would legislate from a higher standpoint, and seek to preserve one of the choicest game birds known. Granting, for the sake of argument, that summer shooting has but little to do with the decrease in the number of woodcock, no one, not even its most zealous advocate, can deny that there is not only a possibility, but a probability, of its having some deleterious effect upon these birds. Why not, then, keep upon the safe side, and forbid killing woodcock until the season legitimate for field-sports shall arrive.

After all, what is there in summer shooting to draw one forth? It can not be that they are more easily killed than in autumn, for, although not so swift and strong of wing, their flights are fully as erratic, and the covers, thick with their wealth of leaves, block the aim.

It can not be the desire for healthful pleasure afield with dog and gun, for a summer day holds no exhilaration when the sun shines hot upon pasture-lands that lie dried and withered beneath his scorching rays; when the grass upon new-mown fields is struggling to show a tinge of green; when not a cloud flecks the sultry sky, and the cattle upon the hill-sides stand beneath the friendly shade of wide-spreading trees; when down in the alder-flats, although the sun may not reach the sportsman's path,

the air is stifling, and the mosquitoes are in swarms about him, while his dog is nearly exhausted from his efforts to find the half-grown birds.

Where the law permits this summer shooting, some feign to enjoy it, because there is nothing else to shoot; others — and there are many of them — are drawn forth by the market price of the early birds; while still others claim that in certain sections, unless hunted before leaving their breeding-grounds, there can be no shooting, as the birds do not return, but, when through their moult, start on their southern flight — which will prove true in the near future, if this pernicious habit is not abolished, for there will be no woodcock to return.

The uncertainty of our seasons is another very excellent reason why July cock-shooting should everywhere be abolished. One year the season may be early, and favorable to their nesting, hatching, and rearing their broods; the next year the heavy snows may retard their early migrations and nesting, and later the floods destroy the nests or young, so that the second broods are not half-grown by July, and are in no way suitable for gun or table; but, supposing that July of each year finds the young well grown, still the habit of hunting them at this season is disastrous to the race.

These are happy nursery days for the young woodcock, and should be guarded by every true lover of Nature.

Many a young ruffed grouse meets his death at this season, for "shooting woodcock," by men who never shoot them later, is simply an excuse for being in summer covers where many a fledgeling grouse helps to fill the bag.

Someone may tell you that *he* never shoots half-grown birds; but "to err is human," and when a bird flushes in thick cover before the setter's point or the

WOODCOCK-SHOOTING.

spaniel's spring, where the quickest snap-shot is required, he must have a prophet's eye who can tell whether it be fledgeling or full-grown bird. Avoid such uncertainty, and do not put temptation in the sportsman's path.

There has always been a mystery connected with the woodcock's disappearance during the moulting season, and various theories have been advanced in explanation: some claim that they remain in their breeding grounds, but can not be found, as they give no scent, and will not flush; some, that they betake themselves to the corn-fields, and can be found there in numbers; some, that they fly to the high mountains and ridges, where no one ever thinks of looking for them; while still others assert that upon leaving their breeding-ground they migrate farther north. Each and all seem to attribute this disappearance to their moulting, without taking into consideration the fact that there may be other causes. Do not all birds moult? and why should these not disappear as well, if the cause be only the casting off of an old gown, and the taking on of a new one?

After a careful comparison of the different years in which I have studied the habits of these birds, and recalling some unusually wet Augusts, when they seemed to remain in numbers in their summer haunts, my conclusion is that their disappearance is not so much due to their moulting, as to the effect that the season may have upon their feeding-grounds.

Woodcock are great gourmands, and the drought, which usually comes about the time they begin to moult, dries up and hardens the places where they have lived, loved, and fed all the summer long, thus necessitating a change, and so they scatter; and if, in certain sections, they disappear, although their grounds are apparently capable of furnishing food, it is only that appearances are deceitful, and the food is not there in reality. The

young are able to take care of themselves by this time, and do not need the parents' solicitous attention, and whether found alone by some secluded spring, deep in the recesses of the hills, or in numbers in some back-woods swamp, it is simply another phase of that great question which agitates so many minds—that of supply and demand.

There may be a few birds willing to eke out an existence in the wettest portions of their old haunts, others who choose the corn-fields, if they be moist enough, and still others who know of springs among the mountains, which early in the season reached the lowlands, moistening the loam, but now lose their waters in more immediate surroundings.

Among the hills there are swamps rarely visited by man, which, flooded in the earlier summer, now expose their soil, furnishing fine feeding-grounds for woodcock. In such places I have found woodcock in fair numbers during the period of their moult, and I know of a pond nestling in the depression of a high ridge of pasture-land, forty rods away from the nearest grove of birches, pines, and maples, where, in the spring, the dusky-duck stops to rest and feed, that in August, when the hot sun has absorbed its waters, shows countless woodcock borings, while in the covers near, the moulting birds may be flushed. After a week of sunshine, the soil becomes parched, and that place knows them no more until another season shall have run its course.

Even now, though one know where to find them, there is no more real pleasure in their pursuit than in July, for the chill of autumn is not yet in the air, nor are the birds plump of body, or smooth and glossy of feather; but when the heat of summer days and nights is on the wane, and the forest is changing its robe of green to one of many colors; when the crops have all been garnered,

and the grass and clover are springing green again in the stubbled fields; when the corn is ripe and ready to be husked—then, and not until then, can the sportsman take the field with dog and gun, restrained by no twinge of conscience, forbidden by no law; and he who has waited all these days is well repaid for waiting, for the woodcock is altogether a different bird from what it is when found in the summer months; its dress is richer in its coloring, its body fast gaining that rotundity which comes only when free from the worry of moulting and finding food where food is scarce; its flight shows far more vigor, and the whistle of its wings is sharper, louder, clearer than before.

This whistle is another of the peculiarities of the woodcock which are so puzzling. It does not come from the throat and bill, as would naturally be supposed, but from the pinions as they cleave the air. I have held a woodcock by the legs, and heard this whistle as it fluttered to escape, and to satisfy myself that the noise was made by its wings, have grasped it by the neck and bill, and still that whistle; but when the wings stopped beating, the whistle ceased. The woodcock possesses vocal powers of no mean order, as its love-songs during its breeding-season testify; but the whistle when the bird is flushed is not the result of vocal effort.

Examine the pinions, and you will find the first three feathers altogether different from the others—shorter and narrower—and in this difference lies that mysterious whistle. It takes great force to start the woodcock in its perpendicular flight, and the resistance offered to its wings must be immense, since its body keeps about the same relative position, with bill pointed downward, that it has when its course is horizontal, and the air rushing through the first three feathers of each pinion makes the whistle, which ceases when the angle of resistance is

varied by the change of flight. No other of our upland game birds whistles in its flight, for no other possesses these peculiar characteristics.

I have flushed moulting birds when these first three feathers were imperfect, and only the faintest whistle caught my ear; and I have seen them glide away from their nesting-places with full-fledged pinions and make no noise. But when their course is upward, or at a certain angle, in their startled flight, the whistle tells of their presence—a sound as sweet to the sportsman, when out with dog and gun, as was ever the music of Æolian lyre to Apollo's ear, and, like that, variable, irresponsible, sounding only to the rushing of the wind.

During the cool moonlight nights of September—that golden month of the harvest moon—woodcock commence to leave their sylvan boudoirs, where they have changed their summer dress, and visit the southern hill-sides, sunny glades, and tinted brakes, there to linger until the sharper frosts shall warn them to be on their journey, ere the winter snows fly among the naked trees and cover the brown hills and meadows.

But it is when October's scenes are full upon us, and their beauty reigns supreme by the dashing streams, in the woodlands, and along the furrowed hill-sides, that the finest woodcock-shooting is enjoyed throughout the northern covers. And what can excel an October day, when the morning is clear and fresh, and the frost of the night before, harbinger of the woodcock's flight, whitens the fence-tops and fallen trees, and hangs sparkling and dripping from the lichen-covered tree-trunks, and from every leaf and twig, while the grasses, wet with the dew which came at sunset, are one mass of fretted silver? or what, when the midday sun casts over land and water that misty veil so peculiar to autumnal months, giving to the pine and hemlock a softer hue than at any other

season, and to the swamp maple and the oak a deeper tinge, blending so perfectly with the yellow of the birch and beech? Or what can surpass the setter's work—the eager, swift, yet cautious, pace, the quick turn on scent of game, the poise so stanch and true? or what the active roading of the cocker-spaniel and his merry yelp when the bird is flushed? Truly these are glorious days: golden links between heated summer and cold winter: and of all who love these days, woodcock seem to love them most, and are wont to take advantage of them as they wing their way to southern grounds, furnishing in their flights the best of sport; for though one shoots a favorite cover clean, two or three moonlight, frosty nights will bring others to it again.

But when the cold blasts of November rush through the leafless trees, and the cold nights freeze the loam too hard for the woodcock's bill, then they whistle their adieux, and are off for a warmer clime, moving southward, as in the early spring they came northward, with the change of seasons, until December finds them again established in their winter quarters.

How the whistle of a flushed woodcock on an autumn morning stirs the blood! what a thrill it sends dancing along the nerves! None can excel it; not even the ruffed grouse, as he springs like a feathery rocket from the bank above one's head, or from the evergreens almost at one's feet; nor the grouse of the western plains, as he rushes from the stubble; nor the quail, as he whirs from the sedge or corn-field; nor yet the snipe, as he twists away upon the wind.

The woodcock, too, is unlike these birds in the manner of its flight. When flushed, they are up and away—one may be very sure of that; but the woodcock is quite as likely to come into one's face as to go elsewhere, for there can be no dependence whatever placed upon its

flight; and that very uncertainty is, perhaps, one of the magic ties that bind us to its pursuit. Yet the woodcock is no dullard, but as great a rascal as ever flushed before the gun. It will rise straight from before you, as though impelled by some hidden spring; then, taking a dash over the tree-tops, pitch just behind, not two rods from where it was started; or it may dart through the thicket to the outside, and skimming the edge quite close to the ground, drop upon the very margin, or, suddenly rising, dart back into the deepest portion of the cover; or if the dog fails to catch the scent, it may wait until you pass; then, when your back is turned, steal away without even a note of warning.

Again, it may flush rods away, a veritable coward, or sit in an open spot, like the bravest of the brave, seemingly indifferent to yourself, dog, and gun, and watch you with big, staring eyes. Keep still, stare it out of countenance, if you can, and it will soon take flight, but in which direction no one can tell—possibly down the open pathway, probably straight into the thickest bush, where a sparrow would find hard work to force its way.

It is truly wonderful how the woodcock directs its flight, for no matter how thick the trees and branches to mar your aim, it skillfully avoids them, and leaves you wondering how it possibly escaped their network. These leafy labyrinths are open sailing to this dark-eyed bird.

Its knowledge of curves and angles is shown with mathematical certainty; and in the moderately open woods it knows the exact position of all the trees, and will dart away, twisting its flight behind these bulwarks, so safely that you can only catch the shadow of its pinions, while some tree catches your charge of shot. At the report of a gun, it will often pitch headlong down

into a tuft of grass or a bunch of brakes, even if caught on the open hill-side, thereby giving to the novice the idea that it is killed or badly wounded.

But put no faith in these antics, for unless well skilled in the manner of its flight and lighting, you will be deceived, and upon rushing up to gather the bird to bag, find only a strong pair of wings whistling in mockery at your eagerness, as with a sudden spring it is away for the cover.

Although the woodcock springs from its resting-place, when startled, with rapid, vigorous, and not too graceful wings, yet, when it lights in a moderately open spot, its action is as graceful as a falling leaf; its wings fan the air for a moment, its slender legs drop down and gently touch their resting-place, and the bird squats slowly to the ground, or, the spot not being favorable, runs a few rods before finding rest. Again, it will suddenly turn, as if losing its balance, and dart to the ground with half-closed wings, lying wherever it pitches until routed by the pursuer. I say the ground, as woodcock never light upon trees or fences—another of their eccentricities.

To hunt these birds successfully, one must thoroughly understand their habits, know the time of their coming and going, and the grounds they frequent at certain seasons, whether wet or dry. It is not chance that keeps half a dozen or more birds resting for several October days along a stretch of moss-covered rocks shaded by pines and maples, for down in that interval the soil has been turned up moist and fresh by the farmer's plow, the feed then is delicious, and those scattered trees afford sufficient cover. It is not chance that brings to that hill-side of birches, pines, and hemlocks these dreamy-eyed birds in autumn weather, for here and there, by tiny springs that moisten the surrounding soil, enriched by the mold of fallen leaves, they find good feeding. You

did not find them there last year, nor the year before, for both years were dry, the loam of that field was not turned up, and those little springs had not force enough to reach the surface. Woodcock love a sunny spot to lie in on cold autumn days, but the selection of this spot is governed by their appetites.

The slopes, covered with brakes and sapling pines, are the choice of some; the knolls, covered with birches, of others; the alder-patch and willow-covered interval the favorite resort of others. When the season is wet their feeding-grounds are more extended, and they more scattered, consequently it requires more tramping to secure a bag. When it is dry they are harder to find, but when discovered, are in numbers. A moderately wet autumn furnishes the best woodcock-shooting, all other things being favorable.

In their autumn flights, I have found them on the highest hills and in the lowest covers, under hemlocks near large woods, and among the briars in the open pasture; and one day, while walking along a river, my setter wheeled to a point among the rocks under a thin line of alders; I walked up and saw a woodcock lying on a little patch of sand, headed toward the hills. Telling my companion to shoot, if the bird should start, I went down the stream a short distance, then out into the shallow water, stepping from stone to stone until opposite the bird. I tried to flush it by throwing pebbles; it would not flush, and did not, until the young dog, becoming restless, rushed in, when with characteristic obstinacy the bird turned and came straight over my head. My companion dared not shoot, and in turning to get a shot my feet slipped on the rocks, and into the water I went. Apparently having accomplished its object, the woodcock, when half way across the stream, turned, and just as I arose, dripping from my bath, darted past me for

the hill-side cover, where it should have gone in the first place. It was particularly gratifying to see that bird fall before my companion's shot.

They are curious birds in their ways before the gun, and just as strange when performing in the privacy of their woodland homes, and I well remember the antics at which I caught one, when with a friend, one autumn day, I was beating a high hill-top for ruffed grouse.

Our setter came to a point toward a clump of pines, and we expected to hear the rush of a startled grouse; but not a sound. Peering beneath the trees, there upon the carpet of pine needles we saw a woodcock, strutting about just like a turkey-cock in miniature, with tail erect, spread like a fan, and drooping wings, nodding its head in time with the movement of its feet, as though listening to music we could not hear. It was a droll scene, and at the same time picturesque—the tall, green pines above their carpeting of red-brown needles, a red dog standing in perfect pose, with outstretched neck and glaring eyes, a small, long-billed, dark-eyed, mottled bird marching to and fro with all the pomp of a grenadier, and two sportsmen on their knees as silent spectators. After watching it for some time, we flushed and shot it, and in beating out a patch of pines not far away, bagged four more.

Although woodcock are much the same sort of birds wherever found, and woodcock-shooting much the same sort of sport when followed legitimately, still there are slight variations, depending upon the topography of the different sections in which they rest and feed.

In certain parts of the West they are numerous in extended swamps and corn-fields, while in other sections it would be useless to look for them in these places, because of the one being rank and sour and the other dry and sandy.

In the South, in the alluvial and swampy portions of Louisiana, they are found in great numbers from December to February; but upon the higher land, covered with open pine forests, they are rare, except where such border lakes and streams. In the thickets along the rivers and ponds, in the little branches, in the low switch-cane, and among the dwarf palmetto near swamps, they rest by day, and feed at night in the wet savannahs and neighboring cultivated fields. Here, as in their northern quarters, they are very uncertain as to localities, for to-day a certain thicket may be full of them and to-morrow not a bird be found.

During a period of unusually severe weather, they collect in the warmer swamps in vast numbers; and in the streets and gardens of Mandeville, a town upon the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, they have been known to collect in such numbers that a boy killed five dozen in a single day.

Their winter habitat extends from the Carolinas along the southern coast; but in that vast undrained territory of the Texas coast, which is claimed to be the finest feeding-ground for the jack-snipe on this continent, and where they abound from October to April, woodcock are never seen.

In certain sections, when they take to the wide, open fields for feeding, the pot-hunter kills great numbers by the light of torches, which so bewilders them that they are easily shot or beaten down with clubs. Although in many places this fire-hunting has been given up, along the Mississippi, as it nears the Gulf, and on some of the bayous, notably the Bœuf, and along the Atchafalaya, it is still practiced to some extent, owing to the physical characteristics of the country, which, it is claimed, make it almost impossible for one to find and shoot them in their day-time haunts. This may be exciting, but has

none of the inspiration of true sportsmanship, any more than has the yarding and killing of deer when the snow lies too deep for their legitimate pursuit.

When given a fair field and fight, woodcock can hold their own against all comers, and seem at times to set all human knowledge of their ways at defiance, puzzling the most experienced hunter to find them with success; but it is usually when he, unmindful of the peculiarities of the country, or of that particular season, looks for them in their usual haunts, or depends upon their flights being at the same period as in some other year, different in itself, and preceded by a different spring and summer.

Woodcock, before their migratory flights, are somewhat nomadic in their ways, changing their feeding-grounds frequently, thus leading many to believe that they are on their southern journey.

The autumnal equinox, if followed by two or three sharp, frosty nights, usually starts the first flight southward, and when once the birds commence to move in numbers, one may be sure of good shooting. A still day is the best for woodcock-shooting, especially if following a rain, for then the scent lies better, and so do the birds. On windy days, woodcock are wild, and usually flush with the wind, no matter which way it blows. The idea that when found in their autumn flights they always flush toward the south, and continue in that direction, no matter how often started, is simply a theory not borne out by facts.

These birds being unlike all others in their field tactics, he who hunts them should have a somewhat different outfit from that used in pursuit of other game. The choke-bore is out of place in a woodcock cover, for it either misses or tears the bird in pieces, and a heavy gun has no advantage, for the range at which woodcock are shot is usually within the killing power of the cylin-

der-bore and light charge, and even half a pound makes quite a difference in a long day's tramp. A seven-pound, twelve-bore gun, with barrels twenty-eight, or even twenty-six, inches in length, loaded with three drams of powder—that which gives least recoil and smoke preferred—and one ounce of No. 12 shot if early in the season, or No. 10 if later, will, if held straight, render a good account of every cock that rises.

The successful woodcock hunter must be the quickest shot of all who follow the dog in autumn months. A woodcock gliding down an open glade straight away is the easiest of birds to kill, but when one springs from its resting-place among the trees, he who hesitates is lost, or rather the bird is, for, like time and tide, it waits for no man. There are covers where one can take careful aim, but even there, owing to the uncertainty of a woodcock's flight, the snap-shot is the most successful. But for the fullest enjoyment of this sport, whatever one's skill with the gun may be, he must bring to his aid the intelligence of the dog, and the choice depends upon the character of the covers in which the birds are found. In some covers the spaniel is no doubt the most killing dog, provided he is well trained; while in others, the setter or the pointer is to be preferred. When woodcock are found in covers where the underbrush is thick and matted, along the banks of streams, and in ravines where alders, willows, or briars grow so thick that it would be impossible for the shooter to walk, or the pointing dog to work, a small, well-trained spaniel could penetrate and work out every spot and tuft, giving warning, by a stifled whine, of the flushing of the bird, while the sportsman remains on the outside, and gets an open shot. But of all dogs, unless thoroughly broken, he is the most exasperating and useless. A well-trained spaniel should range within a few paces of the gun, drop

to shot and wing, and retrieve; he should do all this without a constant hallooing from his master; but to teach him requires careful attention in the field, strict discipline, and great patience at all times, and the tuition must begin at an early age. Personally, I prefer the pointing dog—and he is without any doubt the most popular with woodcock shooters throughout the United States—for it is half the pleasure in upland shooting to see the highly trained setter or pointer at work; and even if he does, in his higher-headed range, now and then pass some dense thicket that contains a bird, he will more than make up for it in the pleasure derived from watching his graceful attitudes when pointing, and by the intelligence displayed in giving one a shot in some difficult location. Killing the birds is not all there is in upland shooting.

The successful woodcock dog, whether setter or pointer, must, first of all, have a very sensitive nose—for the bird gives out but little scent—be very obedient, moderately fast and stanch, and a good retriever. He should work in a restricted range, around the shooter, otherwise, many a bird, with its habit of turning backward in its flight, will be passed. A very fast dog is to be avoided, but a slow, pottering one will try the patience of the thorough sportsman fully as much, and is perhaps the greater evil of the two. A dog that knows his business may go through a cover with speed, until his nose tells him birds are near; then all is changed, and his caution is not excelled by even the pottering dog, who would be far behind, nosing about some tuft of brakes, or jogging along, poking into each clump of brush or bunch of weeds.

I hunt my setter with a soft-tinkling bell attached to the collar, and from its tone judge of the working of my dog, whether slow or fast, near or far away, and find it of

great assistance, while it seems to make no difference in the lying of the birds. Although there are many dogs over which good shooting may be had, yet a first-class woodcock dog is rare, and invaluable to his owner. Many dogs do not particularly care for the sport, but prefer to hunt the grouse and the quail. I once had an English setter, of a strain noted for its field-work in both cover and open shooting, that although a bold and capital worker on ruffed grouse, seemed to fear the woodcock's scent, and would stop hunting, drop his tail, and come to heel the instant the odor reached his nostrils.

But whether you use setter, pointer, or spaniel, there is a peculiar charm about woodcock and woodcock-shooting that no one can deny who is at all acquainted with the birds, or has ever tried the sport. You have seen the gamy quail tumble into the sedge before your aim, and gathered him to your game-bag, with the knowledge of a deed well done; you have felt a glow of pride as the lordly grouse, rushing on pinions swift and strong, fell before your prowess, and struggled in his death-battle upon the autumn leaves; but there comes a feeling that can not be explained when you take the woodcock from your setter's mouth, and watch the dark eyes close, and that soft, velvety sheen over head and neck fade away until there is only left the dull gloss of a mottled plumage, and the bird-life has passed beyond recall.

How the memories of days passed amid the woodcock's haunts crowd in upon our reveries when the land is snow-bound and the streams are ice-locked! and how we long for the time to come when these dark-eyed birds shall once more breed among the alder-dells, and sing their love-songs in the gloaming of warm spring evenings!

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THE QUAILS OF CALIFORNIA.

By T. S. Van Dyke,

Author of "The Still Hunter," "The Rifle, Rod, and Gun in California," "Southern California," etc.

THERE is probably no other game bird that flourishes under so many varied conditions as the valley quail of California, and wherever found, he seems to get more positive satisfaction out of existence than any other bird. Though more abundant near sea-level, he is equally at home at an elevation of a mile or more above it; drinks plenty of water or goes without it with apparently equal ease, and seems quite as happy in the glare of the sunlit plain as in the cool arbors of wild rose, sycamore, and wild grape that form dense shades along the creek bottom. Alike to him are the settler's garden and the lofty hill-top miles away from sight or sound of man; and though he can never be satiated with raisin-grapes or strawberries, he will keep quite as fat and cheerful upon scanty picking of dry grass-seed upon the stoniest hill-side.

Few of our game birds are so eternally busy as this quail. He hardly ever rests except at night, never looks sad or bored, never sits around with ruffled feathers or drooping head, but wears always either a decided business air or a sublime look of contentment. He lacks the modest, retiring ways that make Bob White so hard to find, even with a good dog, but rather courts inspection—comes

boldly out to look at you, and seems generally anxious to let you know that he is about. He lives and moves the whole year round beneath the eye of everyone familiar with the land beyond the pavement, and there is no bird whose private life and business methods are so easy to become thoroughly acquainted with.

The valley quail's peculiar colors of slate-blue, gray, white, and cinnamon, and the long, jaunty plume of jet hanging forward over his bill, are now too generally known to need special description here. In size he is a little smaller than Bob White, and quite inferior to Bob in flavor, though still a very good bird, except when in the hands of a cook whose sole knowledge of quail is the cabalistic phrase, "quail on toast." In such hands the combination is almost as good as chip on pasteboard.

This quail apparently breeds but once a year, and seldom raises a new brood if the first be destroyed, as young ones are rarely seen late in the season, as is often the case with Bob White. The number of eggs is from twelve to seventeen, and though the bird is smaller, its eggs are larger than those of the eastern quail, and are well spotted with chocolate blotches. It shows a remarkable instinct in not breeding, after winters of too low rain-fall, in those sections where the winter rains are occasionally too light for a good growth of vegetation. In such cases it remains unmated all summer, in the large flocks into which it was banded in the fall, and so continues until the next season of sufficient rain.

Few birds have so many different notes as the valley quail, and in few do pitch, tone, and accent vary so much, even with the same individual. The common call is a flute-like, penetrating *o-hi-o*, rapidly repeated four or five times, but varied often, so that it sounds like *ko-loi-o*. Again, the accent is shifted until it sounds like *tuck-a-hoe*, and sometimes the accent is so heavy on

the second syllable that it becomes *k-woick-uh*, and often this last *uh* is dropped entirely, and only a low *k-woick* is heard. During hatching-time, the male, perched upon a bush near the nest, sends forth, at intervals of a minute or two, a low *wah* full of deep content, and often during this time, when on the ground or moving about, he gives a metallic-toned *whcoooo* or *tcoooo*, often sounded several times in quick succession, and sometimes in a husky tone. The alarm-call is a sharp *whit*, *whit*, *whit*, changing often into a low, muffled *wook*, *wook*, *wook*, *wook*, while the birds are on the ground, but when they rise, a sharp, clear *chirp*, *chirp*, *chirp*, is the only sound heard, and this is generally from birds started singly.

This quail is abundant over the greater part of California, and for several hundred miles below the Mexican line, in those sections where the rain-fall is sufficient. Its numbers in many sections, before the railroads opened the country to the market-shooter, were incredibly great, especially in the County of San Diego, where it so abounded as to astonish even old California shots from other parts of the State. The statement may seem extravagant, but for many years it was a simple matter for any good shot to bag 200 in a day, all at single shots on the wing. For several years dozens of market shooters shipped an average of 10,000 apiece for the season. This hoggish work, with the number crippled and finally killed, has greatly reduced their numbers. But seventy-five or a hundred can still be killed in a few hours, though it requires far more tramping than formerly to do it.

These figures will be readily understood by recollecting that the abundance of the birds is more apparent than real. During the shooting-season they are concentrated; during the months of July and August the bevies run together, like those of the pinnated grouse, into flocks of

several bevies; and these flocks again unite, until dark sheets of quail, sometimes covering half an acre or more of sun-dried grass or stubble, may be seen around the edges of every valley. Out of cactus-patches, clumps of sumac, and old piles of granite rock in the smaller cañons, they flutter and squeal by hundreds, and even thousands; and in the spring, in the morning or evening, one may hear for several seconds a steady roar of wings, and see the air in all directions filled with hundreds of blue lines of wheeling, twisting, and chirping life. It is to this habit of descending from the hills after the breeding-season, and thus congregating in the valleys, that the bird owes its name of "valley quail."

Before the gun this bird makes in some respects more sport than Bob White, while in other respects the shooting is decidedly inferior. For one who knows how to handle the valley quail, the shooting is much less fatiguing, and much more certain to yield a good bag, than any shooting now to be found in the Eastern States. The shooting is nearly all open or in low brush, under the clearest of skies, with great mountains looking down upon one from all directions. There are no bogs to flounder through, no briars to tear and swear one's way through, no very big hills to climb, and no big woods to get lost in. Either in a buggy or on horseback, one can ride directly to the game, tie up, shoot awhile, rest awhile, lunch and smoke, and shoot again. A large flock properly handled gives two or three men all the shooting that rational creatures should wish; but if one wants to be piggish, another large flock is easily found not far away from where the first one became too much scattered for further sport.

But while one can burn more powder behind this bird than behind Bob White, become far more excited, and, when accustomed to it, can carry home a much larger

bag, there is a sad lack of that charm that comes from hunting a bird that can rarely be seen, even on the wing, without the aid of a well-bred and well-trained dog. This quail never lies to the dog as Bob White does in the Atlantic States, and only in the northern part of California does he sometimes lie as closely as Bob White does in the Western States. In the south of California he rarely lies much better than Bob White does in the Western States during those short periods of migration when, for two or three weeks in early fall, two or more bevies sometimes run together, run into town, fly against houses, and make fools of themselves generally. The first dependence of the valley quail is upon its legs, and it rarely trusts to hiding until thoroughly scared and scattered, when it will often lie quite well. But by this time the dog, unless kept at heel or tied up, is generally demoralized by the running and rising of innumerable birds, and feels more like hunting shade than birds. The more it is hunted, the more closely this bird seems to lie, but it is doubtful if any amount of hunting will give it the habit of lying from the beginning as closely as Bob White lies. Though a dog can, in many places, and in all places where the birds are scarce, be used to great advantage by one who thoroughly understands these birds, as well as the proper working of a dog, no such fine exhibition of dog intelligence is to be seen as is an every-day occurrence in hunting Bob White. There are those who think otherwise, but it only proves to me that they have never seen handsome work by good dogs on close-lying birds.

Though large quantities of these quail may, in summer and early fall, be killed upon the ground by the merest tyro, especially if shooting from a wagon, it becomes quite a different matter later in the fall, when they are full-grown and strong, and especially where they are

much hunted. Probably no bird on earth so baffles the tyro. He hears the *wook*, *wook*, *wook*, and sees occasional dark-blue streaks through open places ahead of him, gone before he can raise his gun. Trying all the time to get a shot at a bunch on the ground, he thinks if he only goes carefully, and looks keenly enough, he will get a fine "pot-shot." Meanwhile, the birds trot along ahead of him through the brush, keeping up their *whit*, *whit*, *whit*, and *wook*, *wook*, *wook*, just a yard or two beyond good shooting distance, but with such a tempting tameness as to delude him constantly with the idea that a little more caution, and a little more keenness of eye, will secure a fine shot at a bunch. In this way they lead him up one hill, down the next slope, and up the next, nearly always a little too far, yet always equally tempting. Perhaps he gets a shot at thirty or thirty five yards into a large bunch in some opening, and pours his second barrel in all confidence into the roaring black sheet that rises at the report of his first barrel. No more stunning surprise awaits mortal man than when, after two such shots, the tyro advances hopefully through the smoke to bag his game. He sees, perhaps, a wing-broken bird or two scud darkly away through the brush almost as fast as it once could fly, finds a few feathers, and hears a bird fluttering in its death-struggles a dozen yards or more down the hill-side among the brush. But more often he finds nothing but a few feathers, and by the time he gives up the search for a dead bird, the flock is two or three hundred yards away on another hill-side, already collected together, and ready to repeat the same games.

But still more amusing is often the work of the experienced shot from the East, who comes with a good dog, a quick eye, and ready finger—a skillful shot, perhaps, both in cover and in the open. Most of the Californians claim that their valley quail is a harder bird to shoot than Bob

White. Beyond question it is a far harder bird to kill, but taken under the same circumstances, and especially at the same distance of rising, it certainly is not a harder bird to hit. It flies no faster and twists no more than Bob White does. Nevertheless, it is true that it bothers the best shots very much at first. Capt. Ira Paine, on his first introduction to this bird, some three years ago, a few miles back of San Diego, missed his first nine birds in succession—all single birds, all within easy range, and all missed clean—before he settled down to steady shooting. Captain Paine told me of this the same day, and two friends of mine saw the whole performance. I have known many instances, almost as remarkable, where the missing lasted the whole day; and it has taken some good shots two or three days to get to shooting well. This seems to be due to the great numbers of the birds, rising all around one at different times and distances, all buzzing and chirping and jumping from unexpected places, which, combined with the peculiar color of the birds, and the strange background of the picture, is quite certain to demoralize the oldest shot from the East.

One recovers rapidly from this, and in a few days can make as clean a score as upon Bob White—provided, however, that he has in the meantime learned how to hunt the bird; for if left to work out his own knowledge, plenty of vexation is yet in store for him. Perhaps at the first rising of the flock he brings down a bird with each barrel. He walks confidently to the place where the first one fell. A moment ago he believed he could put his finger upon the precise spot where it fell. He is now prepared to swear that no mortal, either native or foreign, can tell one bush from another. He discovers a few feathers on a bush, under which he looks instead of looking several yards ahead and in line with the place where the bird rose. He quickly concludes it will be easier to

find the second one, but when he tries to find where that fell, he is even more exasperated than before at the bewildering sameness of all the shrubbery. He declares there is no use in hunting these quail without a dog, forgetting that the heaviest bags ever made are made on precisely such ground without any dog an experienced hand retrieving almost every bird as quickly, almost, as it was shot, and all birds being shot singly and on the wing; forgetting, also, that if he had a dog he would soon have his nose nearly worthless by letting him run too long in dry air and hot sun without water instead of keeping him at heel until really needed.

He loses just time enough in looking for these birds to let the scattered flock run together again some 300 yards away, where they are making the hill-side ring with their clear call, and can perhaps be seen darting here and there through openings in the brush. Until this flock is broken and scattered, he will have no shooting worthy of the name, but only boundless vexation; and he has lost just time enough to have to begin all over again. Just before he gets within shooting distance of the flock again, a bird starts from a bush almost at his feet, runs a few yards along the ground, almost as swiftly as if on the wing, then bursts into flight, with a clear *chirp*, *chirp*, *chirp*, and goes wheeling off toward a ravine on the left. The temptation is irresistible. Bang! goes the gun, and the bird whirls downward out of a cloud of feathers, and, with a tremendous roar, over 1,000 birds rise from the slope beyond. Running to the place where the bird fell, our friend finds a few feathers on the edge of the ravine, but looks in vain for the bird. Suddenly there is a violent fluttering near the bottom of the ravine; he runs down, and finds it bouncing and gyrating in its death-struggles, eluding all his efforts to seize it until it is a dozen feet or more farther down the hill. By the time

he has scrambled out of the ravine, and got to where he can hear or see the main flock again, they are some 300 yards or more farther away, all together again, and all prepared to lead him another weary chase. And so he may go on until, heated, breathless, and thoroughly mad, he quits the field with six or eight birds, declaring that of all sublunary abominations California quail-shooting takes the lead.

This is a very hasty judgment, however, for nothing in the line of shooting will exceed the certainty with which that same man, after a few weeks' practice, will bag from 150 to 200 birds with little more work than his first half a dozen cost him. And the regularity and quickness of his shooting will scarcely equal the certainty and quickness with which he will pick up dead birds, remembering, unconsciously, their course, speed, direction of wind, etc., and going at once to where they fell, guided only, perhaps, by a single feather on a bush to a bird twenty or thirty feet away.

The first, and in fact the only important, step to easy success is not to attempt to bag anything at first, but spend all your time in breaking and scattering the flock. This can be done only by rapid and repeated flushing, without giving them time to get together again. Firing over them, and especially in front of them, materially aids this scattering. For this reason, two persons can always do better together than alone, and by working around on the outside can keep the birds more or less rounded-up toward a common center. The more rapidly you run upon the flock, and the more noise you make, the more apt you are to break the flock at the first charge; and if two or more persons are ahead of them, and fire their guns off, the greater the probability of this result. Wherever the flock alights the first time, lose no time in getting there. At each charge you make upon them, they will scatter

wider and wider when they alight. If quickly handled, you will have them scattered over fifteen or twenty acres at the second or third flushing, which should not take more than fifteen minutes in all; but even now turn your attention first to any considerable number that may have kept close together, and break and scatter every bunch as fast as possible. You may now have 1,000 or 1,500 quail fairly scattered over twenty or thirty acres of good cover, and in a state of such alarm that they will trust more to hiding than to their legs. Quite a number will still run away on the sides, and at every report of the gun some will rise and make off; but these latter will not fly far, and will generally lie all the better when they alight. If you are wise, you will now tie your dog to a shady bush, lay aside your heavy coat and all else that is unnecessary, for unless you travel fast and work rapidly, too many of the birds will yet steal away from you.

Before you have advanced many steps, there is a sudden rustling in a bush of white sage, which the wild pea has festooned with a wealth of brilliant pink; a little dark-blue object whips out of the other side, and rises with a sharp *chirp*, *chirp*, *chirp*, and loud buzzing wings. A puff of feathers rides the air behind it at the report of your gun; but away it goes. You have no time, however, to watch it; for there is a whiz to the right, a buzz on the left, a *chirp*, *chirp*, *chirp*, behind, a rustling of swift little legs in a bush in front, and a dozen birds have broken cover all around you at the sound of your gun. Bang! goes your second barrel at one, whose rapid wings make a dark haze around it as they fan the warm sunlight. Another puff of white and blue feathers, with a shade or two of cinnamon-color, comes back upon the air, yet the bird goes gaily on, and with stiff-set wings sails downward over a ridge as easily as if the shot had only ballasted it for a swifter and steadier flight.

You have now come upon another difficulty which the Eastern shot little suspects, and which is quite sure to mar at least one day's happiness. These are the toughest birds alive, and need an immense amount of killing. They need, too, very dead killing, or half the time you will find nothing but feathers where they have fallen. Cartridges loaded for Bob White will not do. For old, full-grown birds here, you need the finest shot, up to No. 10, that the gun will shoot to best advantage, with about as much powder as you would use for ducks. Even then, thirty-five yards will be a long shot, and if you kill everything clean at thirty that you hold on closely, you have an extra-good gun.

Finding yourself out with weak cartridges, your only remedy is to take no long shots. You will have plenty at ten, fifteen, and twenty yards if you will possess your soul in patience. See, now, as you advance, how from this green sumac on the right, overhung with the snowy drapery of the wild cucumber, from this wild alfalfa, brilliant with scarlet and gold, upon your left, and from among the crimson trumpets of this mimulus almost at your feet, rise another, another, and another. Depend upon it, you will get enough close shots.

Scarcely a dozen more steps do you take forward, when another quail bursts, whizzing and chirping, from the orange-glow of a bunch of poppies, and as you raise your gun upon it, another breaks, just beyond it, from some chemisal over which the dodder is fast weaving its orange-colored floss. Before your gun is in line with the first bird, half a dozen more are buzzing, curling, and chirping upward out of the wild buckwheat just at your feet, over which the morning-glory is all in bloom; another half-dozen join them at the report of your first barrel, and the sound of your second barrel rouses as many more from the spangled covert around you.

What wonder that in all this confusion you have failed to mark the spot where the first bird went whirling down upon the right, and the other fluttering to earth upon the left! Where you think the first one fell, you find only a bewildering wealth of violets, blue-bells, poppies, and shooting-stars among the brush. Going to where you think you saw the other fall, you find only spangled confusion worse confounded the green and pink of the alfileria, the scarlet of the cardinal flower, the blue of the phacelia, the gold of the primrose, with a feather or two upon the red bracts of the painted-cup. You will get the dog, you think; but remember that, although this is mid-winter, the air is still very dry, the direct rays of the sun are quite hot, and without a frequent supply of water your dog's scent will soon lose that keenness that it will need a little later in the day. Better learn to retrieve your own birds, and keep your dog fresh. For the present, take no double shots. Keep your eye on the place where every bird falls, and go directly to it without taking another shot. With experience, you may play with these birds as you like, but not now. Now, you might drop a dozen around you in all directions, and neither you nor the dog could find half of them without taking time that you can use to much better advantage.

You may now go on for 200 or 300 yards, then turn and come back a few yards on one side, then cross your first path, and go forward again on the left of it; and all the while, singly and in pairs, and in bunches of four or five to a dozen, birds are rising around you, some whizzing straight away, some circling around behind, some crossing in front, some wheeling overhead. Some burst at once into flight; others, before rising, scud a few yards along the ground, making quite as hard a mark to hit as when on the wing. Some spring almost

from beneath your feet, others rise at thirty, forty, fifty, seventy, and even 100 yards and over. Very few fly over 300 yards before alighting again.

Nowhere else, outside of a good duck-pass during "the evening flight," shall you find such brain-befuddling intensity of shooting as on ground like this. When you have handled your birds right, the gun flames almost as fast as you can load it, and birds you can not hope to shoot at are whizzing and chirping on every hand at every step forward. Through the smoke you see dark lines darting and wheeling, and a constant *chirp*, *chirp*, *chirp*, plays the interlude between its quickest thunders. You are lost in the confusion and the strange nature of the background; the earth ablaze with flowers that would adorn any garden, yet all strangers to your eye; a sky above you that you have rarely seen elsewhere; the soft air filled with notes of a score of other birds whose music is all new to your ear; the distant slopes rolling away in long undulations of green, and gold, and blue, until they break into the chaparral of the hills, the higher hills looking solemnly blue with distance, and above all, great snow-clad peaks looking down upon the whole.

You may thus traverse this piece of ground to and fro several times, but after the first and second beating the shooting will rapidly decline. You may still have fair shooting for two or three hours more, but when the shooting falls off to anything less than a good shot every two minutes, you may let loose your dog. You will now be surprised at the number of birds still lying on the ground you have just walked over several times. Many of them lie about as well as Bob White, and for hours to come you may have plenty of shooting upon this same ground. But though no one loves hunting with a good dog more than I do, I prefer the uproar and racket of a new flock, which, up to the last three

years, used to be quite as easy to find as it is to keep your dog in order to hunt on one sufficiently scattered to lie closely.

When we leave the lowlands of California, and begin to climb the highlands, where the rain-fall is much heavier and timber and running brooks in summer more abundant, and clear springs begin to break from every hill-side, we meet another variety of quail, although we have by no means lost sight of our old friend the valley quail. This new quail is called the mountain quail in California. It is said to be the common quail of Oregon, and to be found there near sea-level. But in California, though occasionally found within 1,500 feet or so of sea-level, its favorite home is a mile or more above that, and it is often most abundant at an altitude where the valley quail has entirely disappeared. It is apparently a larger bird than Bob White, being fuller feathered, but in fact only a trifle larger, if any. It is plump and full-breasted, and as graceful and artless in every motion as Bob himself. Its breast is a slate-blue, with a low-cut vest of bright cinnamon mottled with white. Farther back along the sides are four bands of white; the back is a brownish gray, with tail bluish above and cinnamon-tinged beneath. Around a full, swelling throat is a white collar, with a cinnamon-colored necktie. The head is slate-blue, small, and cunningly set with a grayish-brown top-knot, from the top of which rise two long, slender plumes of jet black.

In character, the mountain bird differs radically from the valley quail. The valley bird is a perfect hoodlum, roistering, bold, saucy, and defiant. He ravages vineyards almost beneath the owner's nose, yet his clear *whit*, *whit*, *whit*, of alarm indicates an abiding confidence in his ability to take care of himself. He knows quite well the range of a gun, and though he makes an occasional mistake by basing his calculations upon cheap powder and

pot-metal, he generally has the laugh on the countryman, and is again gorging his fine raisin-grapes before he has got fairly into the house.

But the mountain quail is all gentility and politeness. He lingers around in your presence as if he would like to trust you, as if his better judgment inclined him to be your friend, if only his foolish little legs could be persuaded it were safe. But the legs are the better logician, and a decided tendency to disappear underlies all his most trustful movements. In many parts of the State this quail is much wilder than in others, and is so even when little shot at; but in the mountains of the south they are the most artless little innocents imaginable. Yet, when once they find their confidence in you misplaced, their little feet bear them away with a marvelous speed; and when they find their legs too slow, they can unfold as swift a pair of wings as any quail, and dart with ease through the heaviest chaparral. Quick must be the eye and the aim to catch one before it wheels behind the dense arms of the manzanita, which will stop fully half the shot, and quicker still the eye and hand that can scatter on the air feathers of blue and cinnamon and white before the owner crosses the opening between two dense thickets of lilac. Often must the shot mow down the dense green of the brush live-oak, and often on the steep hill-side must one drop on one knee to catch a sight on the swift-scudding mark before it fades among the leaves above.

The calling-note of this bird is a mellow *cloi*, *cloi*, *cloi*, or *woi*, *woi*, *woi*, penetrating and far-reaching as the note of the upland plover. Its note of alarm is a *ch*, *ch*, *ch*, *ch*, *cheeah*, sounding sometimes harder, like *quit*, *quit*, *quit*, *quit*, *queeah*, most dolorous and distressing in tone when the mother has her little brood with her. It lays from twelve to fifteen eggs of pure white, in a nest along

the mountain-side quite difficult to find. The chicks are little gray scraps of energy, that can eclipse even Bob White in getting away with half the shell still clinging.

The mountain quail does not unite in large flocks as the valley quail does, nor does it descend into the valley of the mountains any more after reaching full growth than before. It remains always until next mating-time in the leveesin which it was hatched. It is more apt to fly into trees when flushed than the valley bird, and, like it, will not lie well to a dog. Like the valley quail, it must be thoroughly scared and scattered and the bevy broken up. Then, if the cover be good, it will often lie quite well, but the covey will quickly unite if not hotly pursued, and once together again the birds will quickly run, and almost always up-hill and into the roughest ground and densest cover.

Both the valley and mountain quail are easily tamed, and live well in a cage. I have known the mountain quail run at large every day with the chickens and return to its coop at night. The valley bird does not well endure very deep snows or very cold weather, but it would seem that the mountain quail could be easily raised on the Atlantic Coast. It loves the higher slopes of the great inland hills, where it becomes very cold in winter and the snow is very deep. Far away upward it climbs, and lives and loves where the snow-banks linger through mid-summer, where the cedar and fir are dwarfed and distorted. Even far above where the blue jay squalls, and where the condor rarely wheels, where no hawk, wild-cat, coyote, or fox worries the fond mother, away up where nearly all other birds have disappeared, this charming bird seems still at home.

Both of these quails will survive long years after the market's royal demands and the piggishness of the "big bag" hunter have made Bob White a curiosity. There

is here too much breeding-ground which can never be broken up, too much cattle-range upon which the market-shooter will not be allowed, to permit of their extermination. Much of their home will long lie unravaged by the hoof of the great white spoiler of all that is fair in Nature, and our children's children shall hear their cheery call upon a thousand hill-sides when the valleys and plains below are almost a solid mass of gardens and orchards of the rarest and most valuable fruits that can be grown in America.

THE RUFFED GROUSE.

(*Bonasa umbellus.*)

By C. A. Cooper ("Sibylline").

ADULT MALE.

EYES, brown; superciliary membrane (concealed), orange-color in the spring, faint at other times. Bill, horn-color, darkest above and at tip; short, with upper part curved over lower. Head, capped by a brownish-gray crest; short feathers above the eye. Throat, brownish-yellow. Front of lower neck and breast, lighter, crossed with dusky bars; brownish-yellow beneath the surface. Abdomen, creamy-gray. Flanks, mottled with dark-brown and white, or irregularly barred with black. Back, and top of neck, reddish-brown, finely speckled with dusky, each feather being marked by a large heart-shaped spot of reddish-brown or gray. Sides of lower neck with bare space, concealed by tufts of long, broad, black feathers called ruffs. Ruffs occasionally brownish-black, each feather being squarely cut at its end, and terminally bordered with a metallic lustre of blue or green; erected at will. Tail, moderately rounded; erected or spread at will; light reddish-brown above, sometimes gray; crossed with narrow bars of dusky or black, and with one broad bar of black near its end; tip, gray, and slightly convex; consists of eighteen broad feathers; measures from six to

seven inches. Upper legs only feathered; naked behind. Lower legs with two rows of hexagonal scales behind. Weight, 21 to 26 ounces; length, 17¾ to 20 inches; stretch of wings, 22¾ to 25. *Habitat*, east of Rocky Mountains.

ADULT FEMALE.

Similar to male, but smaller. Ruff lacks metallic lustre, and varies in color from liver-color to dead black. Lacks the trace of orange above the eye. Length, 15½ to 17¾ inches; stretch of wings, 20½ to 20¾; weight, 18 to 22 ounces.

VARIETY UMBELLOIDES.

Marked similar to *umbellus*, but general color bluish-ash; tail, pale ash. Found in the Rocky Mountains and South Central British America.

VARIETY SABINI.

Similar to *umbellus*, but much darker generally. Grayish specimens occur occasionally at high altitudes. Found in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

Although a description of the ruffed grouse may seem to many unnecessary, in view of the scarcity of birds in certain populous districts, and the increasing interest taken in natural history by the young men of the day, the writer has thought best to follow the mode of predecessors, avoiding, however, the use of scientific terms.

As the sexes are so nearly alike, only the male bird has been minutely described, but a little space further on will be devoted to pointing out the few external differences, in order that sportsmen, with opportunities for observing the habits of this beautiful bird, may assist in clearing away the mists which envelop and leave in doubt some of its characteristics.

With the exception of the forests bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, this species may be found in considerable numbers in nearly all the wooded sections of the United States and Southern British America.

Although it should be universally known as the ruffed grouse, it is called, in different localities, partridge, pheasant, drumming-grouse, tippet-grouse, birch-partridge, white-flesher, etc.

RUFFED GROUSE.

Specimens from each of the three varieties, *umbellus*, *umbelloides*, and *sabini*, are occasionally found with part of the plumage shading into one or both of the other varieties. As a rule, however, we find the lighter-plumaged birds at high altitudes, and in cold countries, though exceptions are numerous. The winter coat is also slightly lighter in color than that of summer, and it has

been noticed that birds, when transferred from cold to warm countries, have become darker after moulting.

Chapters have been written upon this variation in plumage, but Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway, in "North American Land Birds," tell the story in so few words that I take the liberty of quoting the following: "These three varieties, when based on specimens from the regions where their characters are most exaggerated and uniform, appear sufficiently distinct; but when we find that specimens from the New England States have the rufous bodies of *umbellus*, and that examples from Eastern Oregon and Washington have the dark, rusty bodies of *sabini* and gray tails of *umbelloides*, and continue to see that the transition between any two of the three forms is gradual with locality, we are unavoidably led to the conclusion that they are merely geographical modifications of one species."

To show to what extent this individual variation, or whatever we choose to call it, is often carried, I quote from the private letter of a gentleman well known to American sportsmen:

"Many years ago I killed a ruffed grouse near Albany, N. Y., which had one side of its tail all black—a case of partial melanism; and in November or December, 1856, I saw a flock of the same birds near Fort Ripley, Minn., one of which was entirely black. The flock, of perhaps thirty, passed within a few feet of me while I was watching a deer from behind a log, and, as they were not alarmed, I noted the bird carefully. . . . One of my female wood-ducks has an extra-wide white stripe at the base of the bill, one has almost none; one more white under the throat, etc."

Nearly grown birds are thought by some authors to be darker than old ones, but the difference is frequently so slight that persons comparing the two disagree.

Soon after the disappearance of the snow, in the spring, the female responds to the love-call of the male. In the United States this mating usually takes place early in April, and precedes the laying of the first egg two or three weeks. A single meeting of the pair, at this time, insures a fertile laying.

The nest is composed of a few leaves placed in a slight depression on the ground, usually under a log, but often under low bushes, low, spreading evergreens, or in weeds. It is as frequently found along the edges of sunny openings as in dense cover, but is always located within half a mile of the male's headquarters.

For her second laying, when the first has been destroyed, the female sometimes takes possession of abandoned nests, in trees or on the tops of stubs, removing her young to the ground in her bill. This is of rare occurrence.

The eggs of each laying vary in number from seven to fifteen; they also vary in color, being usually a clear cream or buff, but sometimes dotted or splashed with brown. They are ovoidal in form, and measure 1.65 by 1.20 inches, although specimens have been taken considerably larger as well as smaller.

But one brood is raised each year; but should the first laying be destroyed, a second (or even a third) is produced, the male being revisited each time.

When on her eggs the hen often permits a very close approach. I have seen them captured by the hand, and one by placing a hat over her. Such cases are rare, however, as she usually sneaks away from her nest upon the approach of man. The fact that she covers her eggs with leaves, when leaving them to look for food, leads me to believe that she hides from the cock during the hatching period, much after the manner of the hen turkey, and for the same reason.

During incubation, which lasts twenty one days, and until the chicks are half-grown, the males wander solitary, or in twos and threes, keeping, however, within easy reach of their respective drumming-stations, so that their russet wives may occasionally be cheered by well-known notes, and come to them, if their eggs be molested by predatory vermin. Like the average man, they are very busy elsewhere during the season which corresponds with baby-wheeling, but by some strange instinct manage to find their families when the work of raising the young is over. This is about September 1st, and unless separated by a scarcity of food, or persistent pursuit, the members of each family, with the exception of some of the young males, remain together until the following spring.

The young can fly a few yards when a week or ten days old; and being nearly the color of dead leaves, are seldom captured.

When danger threatens, the mother shows a brave front, usually succeeding in diverting attention from her young until they have found shelter. Everyone who spends much time in the woods in June knows the strength of this maternal love; how the wanderer is suddenly checked in his walk by the charge of an infuriated bird, sometimes so determined that he steps back in alarm or amazement before he realizes what is being enacted; how the bird flies at the face, or pecks furiously at the feet, before retreating and simulating a broken wing, or leg, or both; and how, when the scattered thoughts have been collected, and pursuit is made, the maimed bird suddenly recovers, and flits away, leaving no trace of her deftly concealed progeny.

I have never seen anything in bird-life that compares with this fierce attack of the mother, nor have I seen acting that surpasses the subterfuge of the distressed and trembling bird.

The drumming of the male begins with the earlier indications of spring, and is more frequently heard as the love-season advances. This peculiar throbbing roll is common to the woodland during March, April, May, and the latter part of February; is occasionally heard in summer, frequently in the fall, and rarely upon very warm or rainy days in December and January.

The morning hours are usually selected by the cock as the time to send forth these notes of love, although they are often heard in the late afternoon, and at other hours, when the weather is warm and cloudy. It is also common on warm, cloudy nights, which usually precede rain.

"Archer," who is excellent authority, says that barren hens drum occasionally in the summer. I regret that this assertion can not be verified by personal experience or ornithological works at hand. The difficulty experienced by gunners in distinguishing the sex of these birds, is the principal reason for this point remaining in dispute.

Young males, more gallant than wise, do much of the fall drumming, and often pay for their temerity with their lives.

The muffled, throbbing sound called drumming is essentially a love-call, and, under favorable atmospheric conditions, may be heard three-quarters of a mile, or even farther. When loudest, it somewhat resembles the quick roll of a muffled drum, being occasionally mistaken for distant thunder. It begins with an indistinct thump, which is considerably augmented in volume at the second stroke of the wings. The first two or three strokes are quite regularly spaced, with intermissions of about a second each, and sound very much like the flaps of the domestic game-cock when he is about to crow. After this preliminary flapping, the wing-strokes suddenly increase in speed until they can be no longer counted,

and the sound becomes a roar, which is continued for perhaps five seconds, when it is gradually decreased in volume, and brought to an end by a shortening of strokes rather than by diminishing the speed of the wings.

Many theories are advanced as to the exact manner of producing this peculiar sound, but that it has a ventriloquial power, in seeming equally loud and distinct at the distances of 150 feet and 150 yards, everyone who has stalked a drumming bird will acknowledge.

Long ago, this woodland music was thought to result from wing-strokes upon a hollow log, but it is now conceded by the majority of close observers to be due to the rapid movement of the stiffened wings, which strike neither the body nor the foot-rest of the bird. The hollow log theory exploded when it became known that the bird drummed occasionally when standing upon rocks, roots, and mounds. Many experienced ornithologists claim that the sound is made by beating the wings against the body; others, by striking the shoulder-points together over the back; while a few insist upon its being "the conjoint action of the muscular force of the wings and the inferior larynx, which is the special avian organ of sound." These theories seem to fall before the shafts of "Archer," who, in the *Chicago Field* for October, 1878, relates his experience with a pet canary, which learned to drum while drying its feathers after a bath, and subsequently kept up the habit, when dry, for the applause he received. When drumming while perched upon the hand, the wings failed to touch the body or the perch, and a finger held over the back showed conclusively that they did not touch above; yet the drumming was in exact imitation of the grouse, partaking even of the ventriloquial effect.

Before drumming in the spring of the year, the male marches pompously back and forth upon his perch,

imitating very closely the strutting of the turkey-cock. The great pride and passion displayed on these occasions is transiently broken by drumming, for the strained and inflated appearance of the bird indicates that all of his muscular force is centered in the production of the love-call.

For his drumming-post, he usually selects a log in dense underbrush, and when unmolested will give vent to his feelings each morning from the same perch. Professor Baird, in speaking of this attachment, mentions a case where a grouse was said to have adhered to his drumming-log after the woods had been cut away, and a road made near by.

In the fall, this habit is not so strictly observed, as the writer believes that on several occasions, in districts where grouse were very scarce, and easily marked down, he has heard them drum after alighting from the first and second flushing.

From all that I can learn, this bird does not drum in captivity. Mr. J. B. Battelle, editor of the *Business World*, at Toledo, Ohio, who has been kind enough to favor me with the result of his experience in domesticating the ruffed grouse, says, however, that when excited the female taps so rapidly upon the sides of the coop with her bill that the sound could be mistaken for the drumming of the male.

One must be a quick, cool snap-shot to excel in shooting this grouse. Instead of being blinded by the sudden whir of wings, he must have his senses so keenly alert that the moment the bird leaves the ground he calculates instantaneously at what point in the course of its flight he will shoot, and the allowance to be made, if any. This having been done, he raises the gun quickly, and fires the moment it touches his shoulder. Nothing will help him to accomplish this feat so quickly as the prac-

tice, at home, of raising the gun, and trying to have the sight upon a nail-head, or other small mark, when the stock strikes the shoulder.

Nervous men often miss by shooting before the bird has reached its line of flight, forgetting in their excitement to hold over, while others thoughtlessly fire directly *at* a bird descending from its perch, instead of holding under.

Sometimes it is seen that a flying bird will pass from view, behind leaves and twigs, before the gun can be brought to bear upon it. In this case, always make a quick estimate as to where the bird will probably be by the time you can fire, and then shoot to hit that point. The cool man, quick to decide, kills many birds in this manner.

Cross-shots are not frequent, and do not require as much allowance as we give to ducks, the flight of grouse in timber being slower, and the shooting at shorter distances. In large openings, however, the speed occasionally equals that of teals.

An eight-pound, double-barreled, twelve-bore gun seems to be the favorite for this game; although when I once stood beside a snow-covered brush-heap, from which ten birds emerged at two-second intervals, I wished for a repeater.

On account of the short distance at which most grouse are killed, and their zigzag flight in timber, an open-shooting gun will not only bring more birds to bag, but it will do it in a manner that permits of their being roasted instead of converted into hash.

The conditions upon which guns are usually targeted are, $1\frac{1}{4}$ ounces of No. 8 shot, thirty-inch circle, distance forty yards.

Upon this basis, the right barrel, if habitually used first, should make a pattern of about 250 pellets; the left,

350. In a large majority of cases, the above-mentioned gun will give satisfaction when loaded as follows: Right barrel, 3¼ drams of high-grade black or wood powder, two heavy wads, 1⅛ ounces of No. 8 shot, card-board wad; left barrel, 3¼ drams best black powder, two heavy wads, 1⅛ ounces of No. 6 shot, card-board wad, or if using brass shells, an Ely shot-wad.

All hunters do not find pleasure in the pursuit of a bird so difficult to capture, in a sportsmanlike way, as the ruffed grouse; but here, as elsewhere, perseverance and energy win, especially if coupled with the faculty of observing closely.

I do not know why, but it is a fact, that when we hear a man spoken of as a successful hunter of this bird, we at once believe him to be energetic, persevering, intelligent, generous—in short, a desirable camp companion.

We would know more of the successful still hunter before joining him upon a long trip; for have we not read that he wears his hair long, and is crafty and garrulous, or lazy, or that he toes in, or has killed hoop-snakes?

But we never hear these things about the grouse-hunter. When he looks us in the eyes, and says: "John and I killed fourteen yesterday, and we're going again to-morrow; come and go with us," we say without hesitation: "All right, Tom; we'll be with you in the morning, without fail."

The man who never gives a retrospective moment to the time when he looked on the magnified form of his first ruffed grouse, must be more than ordinarily busy or care-laden.

That blissful day of youth, to which we subsequently manage to refer on all social occasions, regardless of the subject under consideration, was probably fraught with boundless exultation, a fitful sadness we could not define, and were ashamed to acknowledge, and an Aladdin-like

growth, which would have carried us quite to the sky had not our listeners refused to swallow, *verbatim et literatim*, our proffered cup of joy.

Does it make the retrospection less delightful to think of the first successful shot as having been made at a sitting bird, with a woful-looking gun, loaded with cheap powder, newspaper wadding, and No. 1 shot?

Was not the boy of whom we borrowed a jolly bit of humanity, for one obliged to work on Saturdays, and did he ever refuse to lend that venerable relic upon the unsubstantial consideration of I O U eternal friendship?

Did not the man who sold us the powder say it was some he had bought for his own use, and he only parted with a little of it because of the great love he bore us?

Did he not say that he was out of No. 3, but that with No. 1 we need not carry a club with which to give the finishing stroke?

And was not the newspaper equal to hornet's-nest for wadding?

Indeed it was, for it brought a "free from care" happiness we do not experience later in life, though equipped with all that fancy dictates.

In looking back upon my many trips afield in pursuit of this noble bird of the uplands, it is with regret that I recall the fact of having been denied the brief period of ecstasy which nearly always accompanies the capture of the first specimen. It is a thousand miles to the scene of that first exploit, yet distance and time are obliterated at a glance, for I see a smooth-flowing, beautiful river, between woods of maple, and beech, and oak. The sun shines upon a light skiff which contains an indulgent father and a ten-year-old, happy boy. On one of the longer reaches, the boat is met by a lone Indian in a light canoe, who, without flourish of rhetoric, tells of a flock of wild turkeys to be found at the bend above.

The wily aboriginal, having exchanged a mental invention for a good cigar, drops his trolling-spoon into the water, and paddles away with silent stroke.

In a stage whisper, the boy asks to be put ashore. The father consents, then continues quietly on his way, while the boy, who has never seen a quail or a grouse—much less a wild turkey—with fast-beating heart and unsteady step, follows the indistinct path along the stream. Very soon he is startled by a rustling in the dry leaves, and sees a large bird, with fan-like tail, step into the path before him. The gun is raised, and fired without aim, and the bird is seen fluttering in its death-struggles.

"So you are a wild turkey, are you?" soliloquizes the boy, as he holds with trembling hands his prize. But before he can shout to his father, two men appear on the path, and stop to learn the cause of the shot. The boy holds his game aloft, but is checked in enthusiastic utterance by the indifference on the two new faces. Then one of the two slowly says: "Ye killed a pattridge, did ye?"

Confused beyond responsibility for his words, the boy asks: "Is that a pattridge?"

"Yes, sonny, that's a pattridge; didn't think it was a whale, did ye?"

But we will pass by that first great disappointment, and the fact that the dismantled "turkey" regained much of its original magnificence before the day was ended, and return to the habits of Bonasa, which will perhaps interest the reader more.

This species, I believe, is the only one known to have the habit of plunging into light snow for protection from pursuit or extreme cold. The momentum of flight, which carries the bird under the snow several feet horizontally, and nearly a foot perpendicularly, is supposed to be necessary for the accomplishment of this act; but

having seen birds emerge at least six feet from where they entered, the writer believes them capable of forcing their way through very light snow, after entering in the manner described.

One cold morning, I started a ruffed grouse, which flew into the deep snow less than 100 yards away. Keeping the spot in view while making a cautious approach, I soon saw the bird stick its head out of the snow, about six feet from where it entered, and, after a hasty survey, take wing.

Several times since, I have seen burrows in the snow evidently made by these birds. Although many believe that birds thus concealed may be easily captured, it will be found a very difficult thing to do. I do not positively know of one having been taken in this way.

There is also a general belief that when crusts form over the snow, large numbers of birds are imprisoned and perish. In support of this, several ornithologists point to a scarcity of birds during seasons succeeding winters noted for deep snows, and weather favorable to the formation of crusts, and to the finding of dead birds after the snow has melted in the spring. While it is true that naturalists, who are especially active in the spring, should know more about this subject than the sportsman, who rarely enters the woods earlier than July, I incline to the opinion that comparatively few grouse die from this cause.

In the boreal regions, where thaws and rains are infrequent in the winter, this practice of roosting under the snow may be common, but south of Latitude 45, everyone who has explored the woods on cold mornings knows it to be rare, from the fact that grouse are found in trees, fallen tops, or loose brush-heaps.

Authors agree that the bird enters only dry, light snow. To imprison them, then, the weather must sud-

denly turn warm, and as suddenly cold. Birds come forth every warm or pleasant day in search of food, and should the snow become crusted or damp during their absence, would not reënter it at night. Consequently the disastrous change must take place at night, and consist of rain, night thaws being uncommon.

How many instances can the reader recall, when the snow was fresh and deep, where the weather has changed from extreme cold to rain, and again to cold, between the hours of 5 p. m. and 8 a. m.?

If very few, and single birds, unable to find a bed-fellow, only occasionally indulge in this eccentricity, the loss from crusting can not be very great. Either insufficient food, prolonged cold in connection with deep snows of early winter, disease, or gunshot wounds, may account for dead birds being found when the snow has disappeared.

What few "burrows" I have seen were situated in comparatively open parts of the woods—therefore reached by the sun. While this seemingly indicates that the grouse remains in his snowy retreat during a part of the sunshiny days, the open spaces are more probably selected because of the absence of underbrush, which permits of his striking the snow at the angle necessary to make a horizontal burrow.

Except in a few districts in the far North or Northwest, the ruffed grouse has learned to fear man to such an extent that it is next to impossible to make a satisfactory score without the aid of a well-broken dog, to divert the bird's attention while one gains the proper shot-gun range.

Even in those outlying districts where pot-shooting is the rule, the bag may be increased with the help of an experienced setter, pointer, or spaniel.

The setter is best, because of his thick coat, which

enables him the more easily to enter briar-patches and thorny thickets, and to withstand cold; for the ruffed grouse is nearly always hunted in cold or temperate weather.

The following experience in support of his superiority comes to mind:

I was among the blackberry-patches of Saginaw County, Mich., for a week's shooting, and had as companions two dogs; one a well-broken pointer (not a blue-blood), the other a thick-coated Irish setter, who had so far forgotten his early training, by serving as "town dog," as to chase a bird until it took refuge in a tree, and then proclaim the fact with an indefatigable vehemence that was very amusing to everyone save his owner.

On the second morning, the pointer refused to enter the thorny coverts. I therefore sent in the ambitious red-coat, who hurriedly dispersed the congregations. At the end of the first hour, I caught and thrashed him. This was repeated at irregular intervals until night-fall, when I had a thoroughly subjugated dog, and all of my shells intact.

Next morning, much to my surprise, this dog pointed like a veteran, while the pointer again refused to face the briars. The setter was therefore used during the remainder of my stay.

By the third night he had worn off what we term the "wire edge," and a large portion of his coat; but, undaunted as before, he resolutely obeyed every motion, pointed with excellent judgment, and without breaking, and worked as industriously and unflinchingly on the last day as on the third. It was a wonderful performance, but one that shall never be repeated by one of my dogs, for after our return home the poor fellow lay by the fire three days, nearly blind, and so foot-sore he could not walk.

RUFFED GROUSE SHOOTING.

A dog broken on ruffed grouse is better for that particular game bird, and an old dog better than a young one. If the sportsman can own but one dog, whose time afield will be equally divided between ruffed grouse and quail, I would suggest his being broken on the former bird, unless the hunting be done on horseback, or the puppy be a descendant of potterers.

It being the fashion at present to raise fast, wide-ranging dogs, it will be found easier to restrain this instinct in the puppy than after it has been sanctioned a season or two upon the quail-field. The disposition of the high-strung dog to range just behind the border of his limit is never quite eliminated by early work on ruffed grouse, and is only checked by frequent practice under a master hand.

As Nature asserts herself when untrammeled, so will a temporary "grouse potterer" soon range wide enough when transferred to the more open domain of Bob White. In many parts of our country, however, this dog-breaking on ruffed grouse is a tedious and expensive task; but if BONASA is our favorite game bird, and we hunt it more than any other, the time given to the dog's education is an investment that will eventually bring us many happy hours, and a companion capable of sympathizing with us in our sorrowful moments, and worthy of sharing the joy of our happiest days in the woods.

Never begin the work, though, unless you have ample time and patience, or money to pay for its being well done; for of all the exasperating and comfort-destroying things which come to the sportsman afield, none equals the torture brought by the crazy antics of a half-broken dog. The initial lessons may be given on young birds, which lie better; but if this course be too long followed, many old birds will be flushed ere the dog learns that safety lies in stopping the instant a bird is scented.

The perfect dog has a keen nose; knows nearly as well as his master where game is likely to be found; silently approaches promising coverts from the leeward; points the instant he catches scent; keeps in sight of his master; watches him, and obeys each motion; holds his point until ordered to flush; stops until ordered to retrieve, and quarters his ground thoroughly at a moderate gait.

Next in value to the setter and the pointer is a well-broken spaniel, which follows at heel until ordered to scour a thicket upon whose border your companion and self have taken stands.

In wooded regions, where but little hunting is done, a fast, ranging, yelping cur will tree about one-half of the birds found; but etiquette no longer allows the sportsman to shoot a sitting bird, though the chances are two to one he will miss it if flushed.

When conscious of danger, this grouse rises with a loud whir, and, if the surroundings are favorable, flies straight away from the cause of alarm. It seldom rises more than ten feet in the air, and the flight is rarely protracted beyond 250 yards. When suddenly disturbed by a dog or fox, and rising, as it were, to a point of inquiry, the flight is often silent, as it always is when the bird rises of its own accord. In the latter case, the flight closely resembles that of the pinnated grouse, part of it being made with extended wings; but when forced, it is almost invariably a continual beating of wings.

This bird flies at night only when disturbed. I have never known of its coming in contact with trees, on even the darkest nights, though it occasionally rises above them, as if to avoid the possibility of such an occurrence. In the day-time, it has been known to fly against windows and white houses.

Young birds are most delicious as food. In fact, all are in prime condition for the table during early autumn,

and, if properly cooked, rank with the best of game birds.

A belief prevails in districts where the laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) grows, that the flesh can not be eaten with safety when snow covers the ground. If, from a scarcity of other food, there be reason to think that the bird has eaten of this poisonous shrub, the crop and intestines should be removed immediately after death, and examined. The fact that the bird is not killed by an occasional indulgence, seems to indicate that the laurel is not a virulent poison, or that dangerous absorption is possible only after death. The examination, however, will put the mind at rest, if our Southern brother sportsmen be in doubt regarding this absorption in life.

The food of this species consists, in summer, of strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, huckleberries, wheat, choke-cherries, grasshoppers, and other insects; in the fall, of wild grapes, cranberries, the seeds of blackberries, insects, haws, wintergreen berries and leaves, buckwheat, corn, thorn-apples, and partridge-berries; in the winter, of thorn-apples, acorns, wintergreens, grape seeds and leaves, and cone-seeds of evergreens; and during the early spring, principally of the buds of the birch, the poplar, the beech, the alder, and, rarely, those of the apple.

Whenever ruffed grouse enter a grain-field, which is not often, they keep close to the fence, and upon the first intimation of danger, retire to the nearest sequestered retreat. Like the domestic fowl, they avail themselves of sunny, sandy spots wherein to dust and scratch.

Mr. Audubon states that, where very abundant, these birds perform partial migrations, evidently in search of food. These sallies have always been extremely rare, and now that birds are no longer abundant, have undoubtedly ceased.

Rarely do they wander more than a mile from their birth-place. Knowing this, one would naturally expect to find them far more plentiful away from civilization than near small towns, where they are often hunted; but while this is usually true, there are so many glaring exceptions that one loses himself in trying to account for them. Of course the wariness of the "civilized" bird tends to foil the exterminator, and the unsuspecting nature of the other assists carnivorous animals and certain birds of prey to many a meal; but this does not satisfactorily explain the scarcity of birds where the natural increase should make them plentiful.

When snow covers the ground, the roosting-place is either the lower branches of a thick-topped tree, or some sheltered spot upon the ground, such as a fallen top, a brush-heap, or a cavity beneath a log. At other seasons, they roost in thickets, on logs, on the ground beside a log or stump, and occasionally in pine, oak, beech, spruce, birch, or poplar trees, often making a flight before settling, either that they may leave no trail for Reynard to follow, or because they have been driven or have wandered from home during the day or the day previous. These flights are silent, and best known to hunters who watch for feeding deer at sunset.

The variety found in the dense forests of the Northwest, roost in the tops of tall evergreen trees in winter. They feed upon the buds and cones, which impart a disagreeable flavor to the flesh. When flushed, they fly to the upper branches of other trees. At other times, they differ in habit from the Eastern variety only in more readily taking to trees at a greater height.

While upon the habits of this bird, I am tempted to quote a few lines from the poet Isaac McLellan, a close student and lover of Nature. Only half of the charming

poem is quoted, as were I to give the other half, there would be nothing left for me to say:

"In rocky regions, where the pine
And spruce and hemlock intertwine,
Forming an overhanging roof,
Against the rain and sunbeam proof,
So dense that scarce a ray may pour
Across the dark and russet floor,
There doth the speckled partridge come,
In dim recess to make a home;
To sound the drum, or forth to lead
The young, on berries ripe to feed;
Prompt on affrighted wing to break
When foes the tangled thickets shake.
They love the lofty, breezy height,
The hill-side, with its sunshine bright;
The long, mountainous range of hills,
Where bubble forth the crystal rills,
Where oak and laurel intertwine,
And shakes its plumy crest the pine;
And there they love to lurk, and feed
On falling mast and dropping seed."

If the sight of these brown-eyed, innocent beauties, busily dusting themselves or receiving food from the mother's bill, will not inspire a man with tender and pleasing emotions, it is doubtful if anything ever will. The instinct to kill is strong in the hunter; so strong, in fact, that he sometimes kills with the knowledge that regret will follow; but I have yet to see the man so merciless—so utterly destitute of all the qualities that make life enjoyable -as to fire into a huddled brood of these harmless birds. The temptation to shoot single birds, upon the ground or in trees, is greater, perhaps, than the inclination to deny it when done; but such acts bring lasting pleasure only to the youthful tyro; whereas one bird killed upon the wing is worth a dozen potted ones to the sportsman, who hunts for pleasure.

The members of a scattered covey return on foot to

the point whence they were flushed, reuniting about an hour after the separation. They then usually move to some other part of the forest, returning on the evening of the following day.

When danger threatens, they generally squat, and remain motionless until forced to rise, which they do with a loud, whirring noise. At times, however, especially in extensive forests, they spread the tail and walk proudly some distance; then, dropping all appearance of dignity, run swiftly before taking wing. Even in localities where often disturbed, there are occasions when they seem to know but little fear, and again, they are quite wild in deep woods, where one would expect to find them tame.

When shot only in the head, they tower above the tallest trees, fluttering to the earth almost perpendicularly.

In addition to their deadly enemy, man, they have the fox, the weasel, the mink, the wildcat, the lynx, the opossum, the owl, and the hawk to guard against, all of which, in some sections, are sufficiently numerous to render bird-life precarious.

East of the Rocky Mountains, the ruffed grouse lies better in September and December than in the intervening months, and closer on snowy days than on pleasant ones. I have found them unusually wild on very windy days in autumn, though a frequent contributor to one of our leading journals says the opposite is true.

It occasionally happens that we find eight or ten of these birds in an evergreen tree. A belief prevails that when thus circumstanced one may pot the covey by each time shooting the lower bird. Different coveys, however, seem to have different opinions as to the fitness of the proceeding, as very many times the gunner has to content himself with a single bird. With a rifle of small

bore, one may do a little better if he shoot at the body, but the first fluttering bird is pretty apt to flush the remainder of the covey.

Nearly every sportsman has had experience in shooting at sitting birds with a rifle. Being proverbially honest, he can confess to frequent misses (when he was a boy—when he was a boy), possibly more than one at the same exalted neck, which finally left him, in order that some other beginner might have his little anecdote to tell.

Another feature known to sportsmen, and lovers of Nature, is the peculiar throb or flap which is often made by this grouse when alighting in a tree, and which discloses their location while yet unseen. While obviously made by the closing of the wings, it is not always heard, being more frequent when the bird has attained considerable speed before alighting, but often when rising by silent flight to a perch but a few feet from the ground. Whether made at will, or the result of the state of mind when flushed, I know not, but it is not caused by the wings coming in contact with leaves or branches, as I once supposed; for I have heard the sound under conditions which rendered such a thing impossible. If caused by the wings striking the perch, the sound would scarcely be intermittent, as the bird rises to its perch at a sharp angle, instead of sitting upon it from above.

Wing-tipped birds are pretty certain to escape, unless you have a knowing dog. They not only flatten themselves among the leaves of their color, but quickly hide under stumps and logs, and in cavities at the foot of decayed trees.

In semi-cultivated districts, they either tree at the second or third flushing, or lie closely. Whenever they fly straight toward a field, or other large opening, distant not more than 150 yards, the probabilities are that they will be found in trees near the edge of the wood.

Although they dislike to cross large rivers or fields, they decide the question, when nearing the opening, without the least hesitation. If the decision be in the affirmative, and the flight be down wind, they soon attain a speed that astonishes the beholder, especially if he witness the latter part of the open flight, which is often made with set wings.

Ordinarily, they are easily approached when in a tree. A barking dog insures success; but the boy, minus the dog, who thinks whistling such airs as "Zip Coon" or "Yankee Doodle" helps him in stealing a march, chews the cud of disappointment quite as often as that of success.

Do not think because you have flushed half a dozen birds almost simultaneously, from either tree or thicket, that all have gone. Very often one or two remain to startle you with their nerve-destroying whir when you have turned your back upon the spot.

In flat, densely wooded localities, they afford rather better sport than among mountains, for the reason that they lie better to the dog; and the walking being easier, one can hunt over more ground in a given time.

The color of the clothing worn by the grouse-hunter is not so material as in wild fowl shooting, but gray seems to occupy about the same place in the list of colors as No. 6 shot among its kind. A light drab or cream-colored suit of corduroy answers very nicely for all sorts of shooting—is noiseless and durable in briars, and resists moderate moisture. Corduroy is preferable to mackintosh, moleskin, or canvas for all-round work.

Carry your gun cocked, if alone; in company, do so only when expecting a rise. When separated from your companion, and on territory where you can see but a short distance, *never* fire unless you know exactly where he is, more especially if the ground be uneven. The

low flight of the ruffed grouse makes such shooting extremely dangerous. It will be found as hard to restore your peace of mind when once you have shot out the eye of a beloved companion as to "buy with gold the old associations." The men who fire at all moving objects, patches of hair, tufts of feathers, or at unknown objects in waving grass, are not desirable comrades. Let your motto be: *Never* fire till you *know* what you are shooting at. By following this rule, I have missed killing several deer and a bear—also a man.

Naturalists unite in ascribing polygamy to the ruffed grouse; and just here I wish to remark that it is unsafe to disagree with all, or even one of them, for their statements unlike their birds contain something more substantial than cotton.

Still, I can find a little fault with the word as applied to this grouse, and I can also theorize a little, without disturbing very many feathers. Even "polygyny," which seems to me a more suitable word, implies the violation of a law, and is harsh and unsatisfactory when applied to animate nature, which knows and follows instinct alone. If those birds which pair anew each spring comply with the unwritten law, it is surely unjust to term them polygamous; and equally unkind to apply the word to those females which seek the society of a male a second time only when their first laying has been destroyed. I would place the female ruffed grouse in the latter class.

As I have taken but very few specimens in the summer, I can not speak by the right kind of experience regarding barren hens, said to do much of the summer drumming. Neither can I understand why they occur, if polygamy be practiced, as the female is nearly always within hearing distance of the drummer's call.

The belief that the male deserts the hen during incu-

bation seems to be responsible, in part, for the assertion that the males are impartial in their love-making; but if the desertion be wholly the act of the female, through fear that the cock will destroy her eggs, or chicks, for the purpose of a new courtship, the argument loses its force. I incline to this theory, from never having found a male with the mother of chicks, and from the habit the hen has of concealing her nest when leaving it in search of food.

It is quite certain that mature birds of both sexes are often found with well-grown broods after the 1st of September; and that, under favorable conditions, these harmonious relations continue until the young seek mates in the spring. If the mature birds thus found are the parents of the brood, it would seem that something beyond chance brings and keeps them together, and is suggestive of a renewal of the former relationship. In case of unavoidable separation, or more females than males, new ties might, and probably would, be formed; but the violation of Nature's law—if such it can be called—on the part of the hen is more technical than real. The great passion shown by the male during three months of each year, and his apparent indifference at other times, would seem to be *prima facie* evidence of a more elastic virtue; still, unless an equal number of cocks and hens could be cooped together, I should consider all experiments touching this point unsatisfactory.

Mr. Battelle, before referred to, has had the following experience: Twice he found one set of fertile and one of sterile eggs in a coop of two hens and a cock, but each time the sterile laying was begun within a week after the male had been placed in the coop, while the fertile eggs were laid two or three weeks later. Mr. Battelle's experience leads him to think the bird polygamous, or at least polygynous, though I believe he still lacks positive

proof. For the past five or six years he has kindly given the result of each season's experiments to the public through the medium of sportsmen's journals. Unfortunately, his efforts have been hampered by an insufficiency of birds; but if students of natural history will help him in this particular, they will not only confer a mutual benefit, but will favor future generations, as Mr. Battelle expects to demonstrate that the ruffed grouse may be wholly or partially domesticated. He predicts that, eventually, they will occupy here the place of the pheasant in England.

And now we come to the item upon which hinges the dispute concerning the habits of the grouse, viz: the similar appearance of the sexes.

All busy men, who now and then take a day afield, have noticed it. Many have thought that a solution of the problem involved a study of natural history, for which they had not time, or that the knowledge, when gained, would prove more interesting than useful, besides being a topic in which brother sportsmen would take but little interest.

In the determination of sex by external observation, we first look at the ruff. If found with a metallic lustre, reflecting green or blue tints in the sunlight, we have an adult male; otherwise, a female or a young male.

The specimen we will describe has a brownish-black ruff, without lustre, and has been taken in December. We must now ascertain the difference between the adult and immature bird. We examine the feathers, especially on the back and sides, and find that the brown on the tip of each shades into the lighter color instead of having sharply defined edges.

It indicates a young bird; but we go on, and find the following additional evidence: A large feather, pulled from the wing, is half-filled with half-dried blood 'or

other liquid; the feet, bill, and end of breast-bone are softer than those of maturity, and all the feathers, especially the large ones, are soft and easily bent. Unfortunately, we have an immature bird which must be dissected; still, as it is so nearly grown, we will measure and weigh it, though the results may be confusing. The weight is 18¾ ounces—scarcely decisive, for the adult female weighs from 18 to 22, and the male from 21 to 25, or possibly more.

We find the tail measures, from the point of the "pope's nose" to end of central feathers, 5 inches. We probably have a hen, as the adult measures from 4½ to 5½, the male from 6 to 7.

The adult female measures, in extreme length, from 15½ to 17¾ inches, the male from 17¾ to 20. Our specimen shows, under the tape-line, 16¾. If mature, this would be decisive, but now it is a trifle confusing.

The final measurement, the stretch of wings, is found to be 21½ inches, which proves nothing, though from the fact that we believed we had a nearly grown bird, the measurements indicate a hen.

We open the body, and there, resting upon the kidneys, is a small, whitish, granular object—the ovary of the female.

There is one more test, useful to breeders. Just over the eye of the male, and concealed by short feathers, will be found an orange-tinted spot, bright in the spring and faint or lacking at other seasons.

The color of plumage is not a certain test, though I believe the females, and all young, are a shade the darker.

Quite a difference of opinion exists as to the significance of the break in the black terminal tail-band of some specimens. My unsatisfactory study of this peculiarity scarcely warrants an assertion, although I will hazard the opinion that it is not found in birds three or

four years old. Mr. Battelle also thinks the brown in the ruff becomes dead black with age.

If these surmises are found to be correct, it would seem that the bird does not reach perfection until at least three years of age.

The slight foundation for my opinion regarding the broken terminal band, reminds me of a great discovery once made by two young mining friends, whom we will call "Bill" and "Tom." They had sunk a shaft 125 feet deep, and had been rewarded with seventy feet of water.

The easiest way to get it out was the question.

After a day of profound thought, Bill startled his companion by remarking: "Tom, we will buy 300 feet of hose, and siphon that water out."

"That's what we will," said Tom, brightening up.

But it was noticed that Tom was more than usually thoughtful next day. Toward night he disheartened his partner by saying: "Bill, ain't it almighty queer that nobody ever thought of that before?"

Whoever hunts this grouse on strange ground, does so at a disadvantage. This is one reason why the country boy, with the "bucking" musket, is often as successful as the noted wing-shot from the city. The boy may not know *why* birds are found at this or that particular spot at 7 o'clock on a bright September morning, or why they are found at another place at noon on a stormy December day; but he knows *where* they will probably be found, and that when flushed they will fly to another place well known to him.

The skillful and observant hunter knows *why* it is, but his knowledge of their habits often fails to reveal their whereabouts, as we shall see.

He steps from the "8.30 a. m. train," at a small station, on November 15th. He has no dog. The air is

cold, and there are signs of a storm. The hunter looks about him, and asks a boy the best place for partridges. "There's lots of 'em over east," the boy says. "Over east" the country is swampy, and appears to be covered with alders and tamaracks. "That might be all right in the winter," thinks the wise man.

He turns to the west. It is hilly, and dotted with both evergreen and deciduous patches. He smiles, and says, mentally: "Ah! we shall find them there; that boy can't fool me." He enters a forty-acre tract of comparatively open woods, in the center of which he sees a thicket. It is on high ground, contains a big pine-tree, a moss-covered drumming-log, and is bordered on one side with beech-trees.

"Just the place for them!" exclaims the sportsman; "and," reflectively, "it's a little cool this morning, and they may be there yet."

But they are not there; they have been gone nearly an hour, and are searched for in vain upon the beech-ridge. It is finally noticed that the beech-trees are unfruitful, and the keen hunter turns to the left, where he sees a patch of scrub-oaks. He does not know that 100 yards to the right, on lower and more open ground, stand two thorn-apple trees, which produce nearly all the bird-food upon this tract, and that a dozen grouse are squatted there, watching him in mingled wonder and alarm. Had our friend a capable dog, he would have found these birds, as the inclination to follow the nearly cold trail would have been humored, whereas the tyro would have prevented the quartering of apparently barren ground.

An hour later, the best of men and dogs would have missed this covey.

How about the boy with the musket; would he have missed it?

Oh, no; he would have struck straight for the thicket,

and then for the thorn-apple trees, simply because he had flushed "pattridges" from each place half a dozen times.

Our imaginary hero crosses a field, then passes through another piece of woods which offers no especial inducements to the grouse for a home. The ground is nearly level; there are no thickets, no fallen trees, and there is apparently no food; yet our friend has missed a couple of birds, which lay on a little wintergreen-covered knoll that he knew nothing of. He next enters a hilly section traversed by a creek. Half-way up a hill he notices a small bushy depression, or bench. He judges the place to be wet, and knowing that the bird he seeks drinks but seldom at this season, is inclined to pass on. Still, he hesitates, for a little earlier in the year he would go straight to what is a favorite haunt. Then he thinks the bushes may be haws, and moves in that direction. His conjecture is right.

Out of eight birds flushed, he gets two with three shots.

Knowing the habit of this grouse to fly toward the base of a hill when flushed high up on its side, our sportsman had approached from the side, thereby giving his game a chance to follow its inclination, and being rewarded with side-shots on fairly open ground.

Near the bottom of the hill, four of the birds turn sharply to the left, and settle in some bushes near the creek. The other two cross the stream, and stop near a large log. The four will probably fly up and across the hill, if approached from any except the up-hill direction; the other two are uncertain, or will probably fly straight away.

The same tactics are followed as before, and one of the four is captured. As the distance to the top of the hill is about 100 yards, the hunter correctly divines that the three will be found just over the top. He fol-

lows, shoots twice at one bird, and misses. A cold wind now arises, accompanied by snow. The sportsman unwisely leaves the birds he has marked down, thinking to find more in his circuitous tramp to the station. He

RUFFED GROUSE.

no longer follows the ridges. The birds have done feeding, and are to be found out of the wind, protected from the snow by logs or oak-tops. Look as carefully as he may, he is unable to start a bird. He notes the scarcity of bird-food, and thinks perhaps the boy was right; he will work around east of the station, and see.

But first he will lunch. From one of his capacious pockets, he produces two sandwiches and a small flask of coffee. Experience has taught him that coffee on a cold day is more beneficial than brandy; and though he has heard that only "dudes" carry lunch, he believes that all who start for a day's shooting without breakfast or lunch, because Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett may have done so, will eventually repent, and wish they had repented sooner.

Lunch disposed of, our hero circles to the right, and crosses the railroad. Ordinarily, he would scour the thickets parallel with the track, for birds which had been in search of gravel, and had retired to pass in quiet the midday hours; but on account of the storm, he believes they have omitted this part of the programme, and are to be found sheltered nearer their food warehouses. He finally reaches the low-lying tract east of the station. His only consolation is the correctness of his prediction that it would prove barren. But there is a hill for every valley, and, beyond and to the right, he sees the heavily wooded ground rising, and then evidently descending to a still lower valley.

The snow ceases as he reaches the summit. It is doubtful about the birds coming out to feed again, and our friend knows it; he will therefore look for their hiding-places. He glances down the hill, which faces the south, and knows too late that he has found the fall and winter home of the ruffed grouse. To the left, the side-hill is dotted with blackberry thickets and scattering pines. At the bottom, there are tangled coverts and grapevines, while beyond these are cedars, alders, and a brook. To the right are deciduous trees, and hazel, thorn, and crab-apple clumps. Many of the large trees have been cut down, leaving dead tops in plenty.

"I'll bet I can kill five birds yet to-night," says our

city friend; then he looks at his watch, only to find that he has just time enough to reach the station before the train. He will come again, however, when his dog has been returned from the country; but to-day—he wishes someone would kick him for having doubted the boy's word.

To give the beginner an insight into the manner of hunting this bird in September, I will briefly describe a hunt once taken by two "Michiganders," Jim, a farmer, and Ben, my office mate.

Jim lived a mile out of town. At the time of the hunt I shall describe, he had just received "the best gun in the world," and naturally was anxious to see how it would behave on state occasions.

Ben worked steadily from morning till night at long columns of figures. In July and August, Jim would occasionally drop in and regale him with stories of newly found broods, or the wonderful peformances of his dog Don, until, in moments of abstraction, each figure seemed a full-fledged grouse, which would in turn be aimed at with the pen. Or, perhaps, when others were taking their vacations, he would look wearily across the alley at the heated brick walls, which would often open under his dreamy gaze, and reveal sylvan retreats in the Eagle Water region, or a white tent near a trout-stream, in some little park of the Rocky Mountains,

"Where a vision fell, solemn and sweet."

Then the vision would vanish, and he would say: "Not for me, not for me;" then, with his accustomed energy: "Only wait till the 15th, and I'll show Jim that it isn't all in the gun."

But the 15th of September found Ben at his desk. Two days later, just as he had decided himself at liberty, the door was vigorously opened, and Jim spoke in his irresistible way: "I was up west yesterday, and found

five or six nice bunches, and by to-morrow they'll be back where I found 'em; can't you go?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said Ben, looking serious, and shaking his head; "it all depends on one thing, and that rests altogether with you."

"How so," returned Jim, thinking some great obstacle in the way. "You know, Ben, I'll do anything or everything to help you get away."

"Well, its just like this. I can't go unless you will agree to to—to have that old coffee-pot warm at 5 o'clock to-morrow morning."

We will pass by the undignified performance that followed, and meet our heroes again as they cross the field toward the woods at sunrise next morning.

The energetic, but dignified, old setter is trotting straight for the woods—and that reminds me that Ben and Jim had decided, long before, that one dog, well broken, suited their purpose better than two, or more, equally good; also that partners were as necessary in grouse-shooting as in whist, and that the methods were identical, i. e., only he won who remembered that his partner had rights which the other was bound to respect, and that nothing was gained by getting excited or in a hurry. Through a good-natured rivalry, which existed for years, they never lost sight of these points, nor that the observance of these laws was responsible for a continuation of the friendship.

They also knew it to be safer and more companionable to keep together, and that with one strong dog enough ground could be covered between sunrise and sunset to satisfy anyone except a professional pedestrian.

Each had provided himself with forty carefully loaded shells, hoping, as usual, that the events of the day might be recorded in red letters. As they marched buoyantly along, Ben asked: "Where shall we go first, Jim?"

"Well," said Jim, "I've got it all laid out. We will leave those coveys I found the other day until the middle of the forenoon and afternoon, because that was the time I found 'em; this morning we will look along that bridle-trail of Mathias' for birds that come after gravel and horse-droppings, and then cross over and look among the blackberry-bushes along the railroad. Then we'll take in three or four coveys I know of, and, about noon, get around to the grape-vines by the creek, where they're likely to come to drink to-day; then we'll take in the others I found, and, along toward night, get down into Secord's blackberry and huckleberry patch. Do you know any better scheme?"

"No," replied Ben; "that's about the route we made our record on last year. By the way, wasn't I a couple of birds ahead that day?"

"Not much! we came out even; but I'll see it don't happen again. I want to show you to-day that that old crow-bar is 'way behind the times."

Ben replied by touching his companion's shoulder, and pointing to Don, who had suddenly stiffened to a point in the open woods they had just entered. Then, in a low voice: "I believe that's a stray bird, and he will make for that raspberry-patch in the corner. You go to the right, and I'll walk up on the left till I flush him."

There were two reports close together, a delightful thud, and two small feathers drifted earthward.

"Whose was that?" asked Ben, smiling in a way intended to be both consoling and decisive.

"Guess I'll have to give that to the crow-bar. I pulled a second too soon, and caught that sapling out yonder," said Jim, with his usual good-nature.

Half an hour later, the two sportsmen indulged in a very expressive pantomime, while old Don was cautiously

locating the nearest bird of a scattered covey, on comparatively open ground.

As a show of humility seemed proper, in view of his late success, Ben asked: "Where will these go, Jim?"

"Probably straight away," came the answer; "there's plenty of room and cover, so you take one side, and I will the other; but keep your eyes open, for we are likely to raise one anywhere."

Some poor shooting followed. Seven shots brought but three birds to bag, while the next covey found gave eight shots, in three flushings, and only two birds. It was now 9 o'clock. One of Jim's located coveys, being in adjoining woods, was sought for, but failed to materialize.

"Well," said Jim, in response to another premature outburst of humility, "they probably haven't settled yet for the day, for I don't believe they've been disturbed, so we'll take a bee-line for their nearest food, and save some of 'em the trouble of walking clear home."

"Ah! great head—that of yours, Jim. Ever have it examined—for bugs?"

"Never did," said Jim, laconically; "but you'll be scratching yours about 4 o'clock, and wondering how you are three behind instead of two ahead."

And so it proved.

The prophecy regarding the absent covey also came true, and resulted in the bagging of four grouse. Two were taken from a covey found along the creek at noon, seven from two early afternoon coveys, and three from the huckleberry-patch at the end of their circuit.

Just as the rays of the setting sun were making rubies of the glass in Jim's chamber window, the two tired sportsmen emerged from the woods back of the house.

"That ain't much of a house," said Jim, apologetically, pointing at the modest little cottage, with its flam-

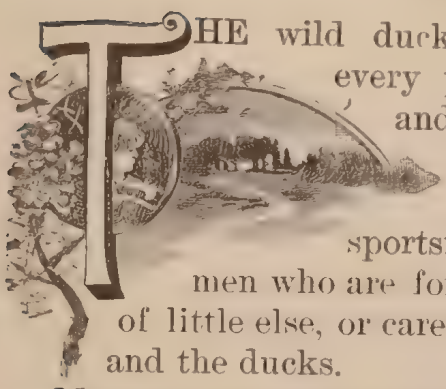
ing carbuncle near the roof; "but when I am tired and hungry, and old Sol paints it up in that style, it looks better to me than any I know of."

"Very true, Jim; that is the sentiment of the patriot and statesman. Always feel that way toward the old place, and perhaps—well, perhaps I'll let you beat me again sometime."

"I'm always ready to have you try," said Jim, as they parted at the turn of the road, each hoping the opportunity might soon come.

INLAND DUCK-SHOOTING IN THE UNITED STATES.

By John G. Smith,
President of the Iowa State Sportsmen's Association.



THE wild duck may be found in almost every part of the United States; and during their flights from the South to the North and from the North to the South, sportsmen, and especially the sportsmen who are fond of shooting ducks, think of little else, or care for little else, but their guns and the ducks.

Many of the wild ducks leave the South sometime in the latter part of February or the first part of March. Some of the varieties stay there till April. If the season is quite early, the mallards will work their way slowly north, and sometimes arrive in Northern Iowa in February. Some years ago I killed six mallard-ducks on the Des Moines River, in Kossuth County, Iowa, the 6th of February. Usually their flight is in the month of March.

I do not think the mallard-ducks generally make very long flights. They will stop where there are many sloughs. They do not care to be in the large lakes, as there is no food for them in those places; but in the sloughs and cane-brakes, where the water is shallow, and where the wild grass roots are beginning to sprout, the mallard-ducks find their home. They like it very much

if they are in the neighborhood of a large corn-field, where they can go morning and evening for breakfast and supper, and will often go many miles to feed in them.

The green-wing teal leaves the South about the same time as the mallard, or soon after. They make short flights, dropping down often to feed in the sloughs.

Next following the green-wing teal, come the pin-tails, dusky-ducks, plain and hooded mergansers, blue-bills, American widgeons, butter-balls, small gray ducks, scaup-ducks, golden-eyes, red-heads, canvas-backs, ruddy-ducks, and wood-ducks; and, last of all, the blue-wing teal leave the South about the 1st of April for their northern haunts. Their flights are short, and made mostly in the night. They feed in the sloughs and small streams on their way north, and generally arrive at their breeding-grounds the last of April or the first of May.

The mergansers, blue-bills, red-heads, canvas-backs, butter-balls, and ruddy-ducks usually leave the South in March.

They make long flights and their passage from south to north is made in a very short time. I do not think they stop more than two or three times on the way to

their "breeding-grounds." On their way north they drop into the large lakes and rivers to feed. These may be classed as the inland deep-water ducks. Their flight is very rapid, and I have no doubt but that they often fly more than ninety miles an hour.

The pin-tails, American widgeons, small gray ducks, golden-eyes, and broad-bills mix with the mallards, teal, and "deep-water ducks," and may be found in most of the sloughs and "inland waters."

The beautiful wood-duck is more of a family by itself. Their breeding-grounds may be found, wherever there is timber along a stream, all the way from the South to British America. Their flight is made in pairs, and always at night. It is not rapid, and they do not fly far without dropping down to feed.

The dusky-duck is seldom found in the West, and is called by Western gunners the "black mallard." Its flight and feed are much the same as the mallards, and when killed in the West is most always found with the mallards.

The great breeding-grounds for wild ducks are to be found in British America, although many thousands of them breed in the United States. Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Northern Iowa, Northern Illinois, Northern Indiana, Michigan, and parts of Wisconsin furnish the chief breeding-grounds in the United States, although some wild ducks breed in almost every State. I recollect, when I was a boy, a gentleman found a brood of blue-wing teal within five miles of Boston. I think there were ten of the young ones. Wood-ducks, dusky-ducks, and some others breed in many of the swamps in New England.

All of the wild ducks that breed are mated when they come north, and they commence work on their nests almost as soon as they arrive at their breeding-grounds.

I think they use the same breeding-grounds year after year, unless they are very much disturbed.

Wild ducks make their nests on the musk-rat houses, or in the grass not far from the small sloughs, and, in a country where they are not disturbed, build their nests oftentimes quite close together.

The female lays from ten to fifteen eggs, and when the ducks are not disturbed, every egg is sure to hatch. As soon as the young ducks are out of the eggs, the mother takes them to the water, and in about ten weeks they are able to fly a little.

After the wild ducks reach their breeding-grounds, they are very tame, and care but little for man. They seem to know that any man that is a man will not trouble them when breeding. Many times I have passed within six feet of a mallard-duck on her nest, and she would not move.

The mallard is generally first of the wild ducks to bring forth its young. The time, in most seasons, is about the middle of May. I do not think that the young mallard-ducks, teal, broad-bills, gray ducks, and pin-tails develop as quickly as the young deep-water ducks, such as the sheldrake, blue-bills, red-heads, canvas-backs, scaup-ducks, butter-balls, golden-eyes, and ruddy-ducks, all of which go north to breed.

The food of the mallards consists of young grass and roots, except in the fall and spring, when they are in the neighborhood of corn or grain fields, and when the wild rice is ripe, and falls on the water. They are very fond of wild rice, and I am satisfied that all wild ducks will go long distances to find a rice-pond.

As soon as the young mallards can fly well, the old birds take them to the rice-ponds in the North, where they remain till they commence their flight south. The habits of all the shoal-water ducks are much the same as

those of the mallards, except that they seldom go to the corn or grain fields for feed.

Neither the red-heads nor any of the deep-water ducks ever leave the water to feed; yet they often feed close to the shore, where the water is not deep. They are very fond of being in the lakes where the wild celery grows, and where the mud-hens are so plentiful that they seem to be in one another's way. Mud-hens are great feeders, and wherever they are very numerous, there is most sure to be good duck-shooting.

The best places to hunt mallard-ducks are in the rice-marshes, or, "later in the season, after the rice is gone and the farmers have gathered their corn," in the large corn-fields which are to be found all over the West. If, about the 15th or 20th of September, the hunter can find a large rice-marsh, or, what is better, several of them connected, where there is a good crop of rice, he is sure to have fine shooting. The mallards are easily killed at that time, and are apt to be in fine condition. The hunter can station himself between two of the marshes, or ponds, and have someone go around and stir up the ducks. He will have many good shots at other ducks besides mallards, as most of the wild ducks are fond of wild rice. The blue-wing teal are very fond of it, and may be found in the rice-marshes in large numbers.

The hunter will need a good retrieving dog, one that will keep a sharp lookout, as most of the ducks killed will drop in the long rushes and grass. After the hunter, or, if there are two or three shooting together, after each has stationed himself, the one who is to stir up the ducks starts out among the marshes.

Now the hunter must keep his eyes about him, for he does not know from which direction the ducks will come. When he is on the lookout, here comes a pair of mallards. They do not fly very fast, as they want to drop down to

feed. The hunter is in a good cover of long grass. The frost has not touched it yet. He can let the ducks come quite close to him. I need not give the old duck-shooter any instructions he has "been there" too many times; but the novice wants to be careful, and not move too quickly. Let the first duck get nearly over you. Bring the gun quickly to your shoulder, glance along the barrels, and if the duck is not more than twenty-five to thirty yards away, lead him from six inches to one foot; touch the trigger, and, as soon as possible, take aim at the other duck. It will, when you shoot the first one, go towering up into the air, and you can shoot directly at it. If you have held your gun as I have told you, you have killed both birds. Let the dog go after them as quickly as possible, as there may be more ducks flying toward you. When you have shot at the first duck, never stop to see whether you have killed it or not, but shoot directly at the other duck. Load your gun at once, and be on the lookout for more birds. Your dog having retrieved the birds, make him lie down beside you. You soon see another bunch of ducks coming. Keep down. They look quite close. You think you will shoot. You bring your gun to your shoulder. The ducks go towering up. You shoot, but discover you have shot too far. Ducks look large when coming directly toward one. In a wild rice marsh most of the ducks will come near enough if you will let them.

While you are mourning over your bad judgment in shooting too quickly, your companions start up a large flock of blue-wing teal from the marsh below you. They shoot, and on the birds come toward you, at the rate of eighty or ninety miles an hour. They are just above the tops of the reeds. How they do come! Now be careful! When they are close enough, shoot at the first bird, and lead it three or four feet. You will be surprised to see

some of the last birds of the flock fall. Select one, and shoot the second barrel as quickly as you can, or the birds will be out of range.

Mallards and teal will seldom leave a rice-marsh so long as there is feed. Once, in company with my brother and two gentlemen from New York, I shot mallard-ducks and teal in the rice-marshes at the foot of Bancroft Lake, in Northern Iowa, three days, and the birds were just as plentiful when we left as when we arrived. They were there by thousands, and it was impossible to drive them away. I believe I could have killed 1,000 ducks in ten days.

If the hunter likes to walk, he can have quite a good deal of sport jumping ducks from the small sloughs and ponds. In the month of September, before the grass is dead, the hunter can get close to the ducks, and, when they jump, he must shoot directly at them. They are very easy to kill at that time, as they are almost a standing mark.

Oftentimes, in the month of October, splendid mallard-duck shooting may be had in the buckwheat-fields. Mallard-ducks are very fond of buckwheat, and will fly long distances, morning and evening, to feed on the new-grown grain. If you know where there is a buckwheat-field, and the mallards have begun to feed there, you will have to be on hand at the field before day-break, for mallards are early birds. I have often known them to come to a buckwheat-field when it was so dark that I could not see them more than fifteen yards away. You will most likely be able to find cover near the edge of the field; but if you can not find cover, you will have to bring a spade along and dig a hole, which will take you but a few moments. Spread the soil around, and cover it over with some old straw, so that the ducks will not notice the fresh earth. It is a good thing to be ready

when the ducks come. Many good shots are lost by the hunters not being on hand when the first birds come to the field.

Now you have the hole ready, throw a little straw into the bottom, so that you will not have to stand in the dirt. Get into the hole, and keep a good lookout, as, early in the morning, it is impossible to tell from which direction the ducks will come. They will be likely to come in quite large flocks, and are apt to bunch quite close to you. Now, mark! there is a bunch. They are not more than five or six yards high. Have your gun to your shoulder. They bunch together. Pour both barrels into the thick bunch as quickly as possible. Load quickly, and step out of the hole and gather your ducks. Take your gun with you, as you may have another shot before you find all the dead ducks.

Just at day-break the ducks are so eager for food that they will not notice you. Set up the dead ducks, placing a stick in the ground to hold their heads up. Now get back into the hole and look out for another flock. If it should happen to be a cloudy, windy morning, your shooting will be likely to last till 10 or 11 o'clock; but if the sun shines, it will be over before 9.

About the time the sun begins to show itself, keep a sharp lookout for a few Canada geese. They, too, are fond of buckwheat. You will, of course, have a few shells with you loaded with BBB or O shot. Hark! "Honk, honk, honk!" Now get down close in the hole; change your shells; the geese will soon be here. Let them come within twenty yards of you before you shoot. Shoot directly at the leader's bill, and then pull at the next one. You have shot the first one dead, but only winged the other slightly. He flaps the other wing, and calls. Load quickly. Keep close. The other geese have turned to him. Now they are close enough, give it to them, and

sit back in the hole and load again. They want to come back to that wounded goose. Here they come! Make sure of your shots, as this will probably be your last chance at that flock. About three rounds is all they will stand. I have many times killed five or six out of a flock, when they came to a field, and I got a winged goose with the first shot. Now gather up your birds, and look out for more ducks.

When the flight of ducks has ceased, gather your birds, but be sure to be back again by 3 in the afternoon.

As soon as you get back to the buckwheat-field in the afternoon, go at once to the hole where you shot in the morning. You will not have to wait long before the ducks come to feed. You will have to be very careful now, as the ducks are more shy than in the morning, and, besides, many of them have heard your gun, and are on the watch. Do not shoot unless you are sure the ducks are near enough, as long, wild shots serve only to frighten the ducks away. You will be likely to have very good shooting in the afternoon, but after that it is of no use to go to that field for about ten days. By that time the ducks will be over their fright, and you will have more sport with them.

Shooting mallard-ducks in corn-fields is great sport. After the farmers have gathered the corn, the ducks often come to the fields in great numbers. There is always a great deal of corn scattered over the ground, which makes fine feed for them. When once they get a taste of it, they will feed in the corn-fields, morning and evening, as long as they stay in the country. If they are shot at very much in one field, they will go to another. They are bound to have corn for breakfast and supper.

The hunter will need a good "retrieving dog," as, when he shoots his ducks, many of them will drop

among the corn-stalks, and it is almost impossible to find them without the aid of a dog. Nearly every winged bird will get away.

When you find that the mallard-ducks are feeding in the corn-fields, go out before daylight in the morning. You will not need a blind, as you can get among the corn-stalks. Your shooting will be about the same as at the buckwheat-fields. Should the day be a cold and rough one, and should there be plenty of mallards in the country, your shooting may last all day. Be sure to have plenty of shells and a luncheon with you, as I know of nothing so provoking as to be where there are plenty of ducks, and get out of shells.

I had some experience of that kind three years ago—the day after Thanksgiving. My brother and I went to a pond early in the morning, when the ducks had gone out to the corn-fields to feed. All the ponds in the country except this one were frozen over, and the ducks came there for water. We put out half a dozen mallard decoys, and sat down on the edge of our light duck-boat. Soon the ducks began to return—two, four, five, or six at a time. I never saw such mallard-shooting before or since. In two hours we killed over 100 splendid mallard-ducks, and all shot on the wing at single shots. We got out of shells, were ten miles from home, and the ducks were coming just as plentifully as ever. At that time I would have given $10 for another 100 shells. We had expected to have thirty or forty shots, and had taken only a few more than 100 shells with us.

Good duck-shooting may be had in streams and small lakes; but here the hunter will need a good duck-boat. He must, in order to be successful, have a boat that sets very low in the water, or one large enough to be trimmed with brush and dry grass. I have a boat that I like very much to use in shallow water, or where the grass and

IN THE MARSH AT BREAK OF DAY.

reeds are plentiful. I have crossed some quite large lakes in it when the wind was high; but none save an expert boatman should be out in a large lake when the waves are running high, on account of the danger of running the boat under. The boat is all decked over, except the place where I sit. It is made pointed at both ends; is thirteen feet long and thirty-two inches wide. The sides are five inches high. The weight of this boat is thirty-five pounds, and it will run well in four inches of water. I paddle it most of the time with two short paddles, but carry a long one with me, so that I can have a change if I have a long distance to go. When I am in this boat, and in a good duck neighborhood, I have a strong line attached to each paddle, so that if a duck starts up I can drop the paddles in the water, and not be in danger of losing them.

On the large lakes and rivers the sportsman will need a larger boat. It should be large enough to carry two men and a dog, and forty or fifty decoys, with comfort. It should be made so that the hunter can shoot in any direction from the boat, and run no risk of upsetting it. It should be made with a scull-hole, so that when the hunter is bearing down on a flock of ducks in open water the ducks can not see the motion of the oar. Such a boat is very handy when the hunter discovers the ducks dropping down in some bay where he can get good cover and put out his decoys.

I have had a good deal of sport by taking a team, loading on my large duck-boat, and going up our river ten or twelve miles, putting the boat on the river, trimming it with a little dry grass, and floating down. The ducks do not notice one until within range.

By many duck-shooters, shooting over decoys is considered the best of all duck-shooting; and I am one of those who think it is fine sport.

In order to have success in shooting over decoys, the hunter must use good judgment in putting out his decoys. Look over your land well before you set them out; they must be set so that the ducks will notice them, and at the same time not be scared away by them. Do not place them too close together, but set them so that they will show well from all directions.

After you have found a good place to set out the decoys, in a situation where you can make a blind, put them out about twelve or fifteen feet apart. If you expect to shoot mallards alone, six or eight decoys are enough, but if you expect to shoot deep-water ducks, you may put out fifty. I do not think there is any danger of putting out too many. Deep-water ducks like a great deal of company. When you find the ducks have come, you will need to be at your ground before day-break, so that when the day dawns you will be all ready to put out the decoys. Put them out as fast as possible after you commence. It is better to have someone to manage your boat for you, then you can set them very rapidly. As soon as the decoys are out, get into the blind and load your gun, as you will wish to be ready for the first duck.

Here comes a mallard, quacking as she comes along. She has seen the decoys. If it is too dark for you to shoot her on the wing, you can let her light, as she will be sure to. If you do not wish to have her light, shoot when she is settling over the decoys. Shoot directly at her, as she is making but very little headway. If you are in a place where there is but little or no current, and but little wind, let the ducks lie, as you will need to be out of sight and ready when other ducks come. Soon after day-break is the best time for decoy shooting.

But here comes a bunch of blue-bills. How they do fly! They have not seen the decoys yet. If you can

imitate a blue-bill, do so just a little when they are just out of gunshot, passing by. Now they see the decoys, and turn back. Wait till they bunch over the decoys, and then shoot. Now be quick! Shoot all the winged birds before they dive. I never like to have wounded birds get away.

As soon as you have killed the wounded birds, look out for more ducks. It is time for them to fly thick and fast.

Here comes a nice pair of red-heads. Let them come close, as you will wish to make a nice double. They are over the decoys; shoot the first one, and then take a good aim at the other before you shoot. You must get a red-head in the center of your charge if you wish to kill him. A wounded red-head is soon under the water, and the chances are that you will not see him again.

While you are waiting, along comes a small bunch of canvas-backs. They have seen the decoys. Let them come close. If you shoot too soon, you will be likely to see them fly away, with perhaps a wounded bird leaving the bunch. Then you will be provoked to think you shot too far. Canvas-backs are very easy to decoy, and the shooter should let them come close.

While you mourn over the loss of the canvas-backs, you will probably see two or three ducks high up in the air. They have seen the decoys, but they hardly know whether to come to them or not; but at last they decide to come a little closer, and you will notice that they are American widgeons. If you get them within forty yards of you, you had better shoot, as the chances are that they will come no nearer. They may fly around fifteen or twenty minutes before they come within that distance.

If it be a cloudy day when you are out, you may have good shooting most of the day; but if the day be

pleasant, the ducks will not fly much after 9 o'clock. Sometimes the ducks fly well after 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and some good shooting may be had.

Soon after the first of October comes the finest of all duck-shooting—shooting on a pass. If there is any place where a shooter enjoys himself, it is on a good duck-pass, on a cool October day, with company enough to make it interesting—such a pass as there was at Spirit Lake, or at Ruthven, ten years ago, where the ducks flew day after day for five or six weeks.

Pass-shooting is the most difficult of all duck-shooting. Most of the ducks fly very fast when they are over the land, and the shooter who kills three ducks out of five on a pass does fine work. It is the place to test a gun. The gun must be a strong shooter, or it will be of no use, as most of the ducks are killed fifty or sixty yards away. Many a sportsman who thought he was a fair shot has been surprised at his shooting on a pass. Shot after shot, and no ducks fall. And why is it? The greatest trouble is, he has shot behind the ducks. He has not learned to judge of the distance or the speed of the fast-flying ducks. He can hardly be made to believe that the ducks are flying from seventy to one hundred miles an hour. With a cold north wind, and the ducks flying with it, it is difficult for the oldest duck-shooters to estimate their speed.

The sportsman on a duck-pass will need a No. 1 retrieving dog—a dog that is not afraid of cold ice-water, a quick swimmer, one that is able to catch a wounded duck should it fall into the water.

When the shooter brings down his duck, the dog should go after it at once, as many ducks that drop in cold water may be only slightly wounded, and if the dog does not get hold of them quickly, will recover sufficiently to dive and get away.

The cold north winds are very severe on the duck-dog, and it takes a race of dogs with great courage and strength to stand the work. The dog may have to go into the cold water more than 100 times a day, and then be obliged to stand or sit still when he is on the land. If the dog could run around and warm himself, it would be different; but he must keep close when not after his birds, or he will frighten the passing birds away.

A race of dogs has been bred on the shores of Chesapeake Bay which are very superior duck-dogs. No cold water, ice, or snow can daunt them. They will go anywhere after wounded or dead ducks. The cold water is almost home to them. I have used them three years, and found them the best duck-dogs that I ever shot over. They have a fine nose, and can trace a wounded duck through the grass where it would seem almost impossible for them to find their bird. They are quick, active, and always ready for work, and yet they are very docile and kind, and so tender-mouthed that they will scarcely ruffle a feather on a duck. They carry the largest goose or swan with ease, and are always so delighted with their work that it is a great pleasure to see them perform.

If the sportsman has never shot ducks on a pass, he should not lose the first chance that is offered to have a day or two of that kind of work. He will find it "royal sport," and although he may count up a good many misses, and only a few kills, yet he will be satisfied that he has had the best of all shooting.

The sportsman on a duck-pass should have a 10-gauge gun, of about 10 or $10\frac{1}{2}$ pounds weight. His shells should be loaded with $4\frac{1}{2}$ drams of powder and $1\frac{1}{8}$ ounces of shot. I think most of the shells ought to be loaded with No. 6 shot, but if the ducks fly high, say fifty or sixty yards away, he will require No. 3 or 4.

He should be on the pass at day-break, as some of his best shots will be early in the morning. In order to have the ducks fly well, there should be a strong wind. If there are several shooters on the pass, and the ducks are working south, and there is a north wind, he will hear some one of them say, "Mark north!" Now be on the lookout!

Here the ducks come. They are coming directly over him, about fifty yards high, and flying very fast. He shoots, but no ducks fall. Here comes another lot. He shoots again, but they all go on. He fires shot after shot, but gets no ducks. What is the trouble? He has shot from ten to twenty feet behind the ducks.

Watch that "gray-haired shooter," just below him on the pass. See how the ducks fall when he shoots. Almost everyone of them is killed in the air. He has held his gun right.

There is a pair of ducks going toward him. Now watch. He brings his gun to his shoulder, carries it from three to ten feet ahead of the first duck, "according to the speed at which the ducks are flying," touches the trigger, and, quick as lightning, pulls on the other. They are killed in the air. He is not troubled much with crippled ducks.

The sportsman should bear in mind that one shot put in front of the wings is worth four put three inches behind the wings. Where one sportsman shoots ahead of a duck, twenty shoot behind.

Pass-shooting is different from all other kinds of duck-shooting, for the sportsman will find that he will oftentimes have the best shooting in the middle of the day. Ducks like to trade back and forth, where there are large lots of them bedded in the lakes.

The best day's duck-shooting that I ever had did not begin till 10 o'clock in the forenoon. It was at Elbow

Lake, Ruthven, Iowa. My old friend, Frank Nicoulin, and myself, got up at 3 o'clock in the morning, to take the early train on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway for Ruthven, thirty-five miles west of where we live. We went to our depot, and sat there three long hours waiting for a "freight train." It came at last, but we did not get to Ruthven till after 9 o'clock. We went down to the lake, and found but few ducks there. The wind was southeast, and blowing very strong. We sat down on the pass, and concluded that shooting would not be very good that day. We looked up toward Lost Island Lake, which is situated about three or four miles northwest of Elbow Lake. We noticed some ducks in the air. Soon a stray flock came down against the wind. They went over Frank, and he shot a pair of canvas-backs. He is a sure shot, and any duck that comes within range of his gun is almost sure to fall.

Other flocks followed, and soon almost a stream of ducks was pouring into Elbow Lake. The wind blew so hard that they flew very low. Canvas-backs, red-heads, and blue-bills came in in thousands. The lake was full of wild celery, the favorite food of the deep-water ducks. There were times that day when I saw more ducks than I ever saw at one time before. I shot into one flock of canvas-backs, and seven of the handsome birds fell with the first barrel. We had two fine retrieving dogs with us, and we gave them all they could do for five hours.

Between 2 and 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Frank got a shell stuck in his gun, and could not move it. We worked at it over half an hour, and finally Frank had to go to town to get the shell taken out.

Just before he started it began to rain, and I told him to send down a team for the ducks, as I do not care much to shoot in the rain. I did not shoot much after Frank went to town, but gathered the ducks and counted them.

We had in all 250, and over seventy of them were canvas-backs, the balance being red-heads and blue-bills.

I once had very fine shooting at the Spirit Lake Pass, in company with my brother, Mr. Nicoulin, a gentleman from Dubuque, Iowa, and one from Burlington, Vt. I never saw two men more delighted than were the gentlemen from Dubuque and Burlington. They had never seen such shooting before. Both were very poor shots, but they had just as much sport as anyone. I think it cost them forty shells for each duck they killed. They were fair shots in the field, but the pass-ducks were too fast for them.

There are many different opinions regarding duck-guns. Some sportsmen think that a 12-gauge is large enough for any duck; but that has not been my experience. I prefer a 10-gauge gun for deep-water ducks, and it must be well loaded. I think a 12-gauge gun will do for mallards, teal, and wood-ducks; but when the sportsman has to kill most of his ducks outside of forty yards, he will need a 10-pound, 10-gauge gun—a gun that will take 4½ drams of good powder and not recoil.

The shot to use for deep-water ducks is from No. 3 to 6; other ducks, No. 6 to 8. I would use from 3 to 3½ drams of powder in a 12-gauge gun, and from 4 to 4½ in a 10-gauge gun. Put two or three good wads over the powder, and one over the shot. I use 1⅛ ounces of shot, but 1 or 1¼ ounces may be used, and will shoot well.

The duck-shooter at a pass, or in a blind, should always dress warmly, but his dress should not be cumbersome. He should wear two good flannel shirts, good, heavy woolen drawers, thick woolen stockings, good, stout woolen trousers and vest, and over his vest he should wear a dog-skin shooting-coat. That will keep all the wind away from his body. If the morning be

very cold, put on a woolen coat, and over all a canvas or corduroy shooting-coat, with plenty of pockets for shells, etc.

Always have a small screw-driver and a shell-extractor in your shooting-coat pocket. You may have trouble with your gun, and have to take it apart. Carry an extra firing-pin, as you may break one. Wear an old light-colored cap or hat; a cap or hat that looks like dry grass is what the sportsman needs. Ducks do not like black clothes, nor a great black hat.

If you are shooting where the pass is dry, use leather boots or shoes, but where it is wet, use rubber hip-boots. Keep the feet dry, if possible.

If the shooter has no shooting-coat except a dark-colored one, he can make one out of an old coffee-sack. Cut a hole in the bottom of the sack for the head, and one for each arm, and you have a coat of good color for duck-shooting. It does not look quite as fine as a well-made shooting-coat, but the ducks do not care for style.

In speechless admiration, his eyes with rapture gloat
Upon his horde of trophies, the mallards in his boat.
A sudden doubt confronts him—how bear them from the shore
Unto the distant station, two miles away or more!

BOB WHITE.

By Amory R. Starr ("Jacob Staff").

OF all North American game birds, no one is so well known to all true sportsmen, or so deeply seated in their affections, as the subject of this chapter; and, alas! no one is so thoroughly misnamed. The name "quail" is most generally used, and is still further growing in favor. Nevertheless, it is a decided error so to call the bird. Universal custom may be pleaded to justify the use of this name, but the bird is not a quail, despite the arguments of Herbert, Hawes, and later writers. It is useless to discuss at length the difference between the European quail and the American bird; this ground has been repeatedly covered. Suffice it to say, that the European quail has dark flesh, and is strictly migratory and polygamous, while the American bird has white flesh, and is non-migratory and monogamous, and in these three respects resembles the English partridge. In size alone, Bob White resembles the quail more nearly than the partridge; and this led the Puritans of New England so to misname our bird. The cavaliers of Virginia and Maryland were better sportsmen than the Puritans, being generally drawn from the landed proprietors and rural population of England. They observed more closely the habits and characteristics of all game, and they called the bird a partridge. Unfortunately, however, the contributors to sportsmen's journals, as a rule, lived in the

part of the country where the name "quail" was in general use, and they so called the bird in their writings, and fortified their position by arguments more or less fallacious; and here the power of the press to disseminate misinformation as well as information became painfully apparent. Moreover, the West and Northwest being settled from the North, the term "quail" followed civilization in those directions, until now, I believe, fully four-fifths of those who shoot on the wing call this bird a quail. For all that, the use of this name is as improper as it is for us in the South to call the black bass a trout; still, however, it smacks of affectation to call the bird by any other title than the misnomer in popular use.

While in this quandary, I turned to an article originally published in the *Century Magazine*, and now forming one of not only the most entertaining, but also most instructive, chapters in "Sports with Rod and Gun." It is from the pen of Alfred M. Mayer. In this article the writer says: "In the North and East he is called quail, in the South and West he is partridge, while everywhere he is known as Bob White. Let us then call him as he calls himself, and we will not be berated for our ignorance of natural history." I had before been favorably impressed with the above, but it seemed to me rather like using a pretty pet name. Just at that moment a white-cheeked

little fellow on my orchard fence, standing guard over his wife and home, said: "Bob White!" and, as if eager to emphasize the name, repeated: "Bob, Bob White!" A mocking-bird on the swaying branch of an immense pin-oak reiterated: "Bob White! Bob White!" It seemed to me a way out of the difficulty. The bird so called himself, the most versatile of all Nature's conversationalists indorsed the name, and I, too, would, like the mocking-bird, become an imitator, and in this article follow the suggestion of Mr. Mayer.

I am further fortified in this position by the action of the American Ornithological Union, in their "Check List of American Birds," where they reject the name quail, and place the bird in the subfamily *Perdicinae*, or partridges, a summary of their classification being as follows:

Order *Gallinae*—gallinaceous birds.

Suborder *Phasiani*—pheasants, grouse, partridges, quails, etc.

Family *Tetraonidae*—grouse, partridges, etc.

Subfamily *Perdicinae*—partridges.

Genus *Colinus*.

Species *Colinus virginianus*—Bob White.

Subspecies *Colinus virginianus floridanus*—Florida Bob White.

Colinus virginianus texanus—Texan Bob White.

There seems to be little or no difference between the Virginia, the Florida, and the Texas Bob Whites except their habitat and color, the Florida bird being the darkest and the Texas bird the lightest of the three. The Virginia Bob White is also, probably, the largest bird, but the size of each varies somewhat with the character of the food, it being said that birds which are found in a country devoted to small grains are larger than those found elsewhere.

The description of Bob White as given by Wilson is minute and accurate. It is as follows:

"Nine inches long and fourteen inches in extent; the bill is black; line over the eye, down the neck, and whole chin, pure white, bounded by a band of black, which descends and spreads broadly over the throat; the eye is dark hazel; crown, neck, and upper part of breast, red-brown; sides of the neck, spotted with white and black on a reddish-brown ground; back, scapulars, and lesser coverts, red-brown, intermixed with ash, and sprinkled with black; tertials, edged with yellowish-white; wings, plain dusky; lower part of the breast and belly, pale yellowish-white, beautifully marked with numerous curving spots or arrow-heads of black; tail, ash, sprinkled with reddish-brown; legs, very pale ash."

He does not mention their weight, which may be stated as being from six to 8½ ounces, the latter, however, being rare. Seven or 7¼ ounces is, I think, about the average weight for well-grown, well-fed birds.

The habitat of Bob White in the United States and Canada may be given as follows: Beginning at and including Southern New Hampshire; thence down the Atlantic Coast to the Everglades of Florida; thence westward with the Gulf of Mexico to the mouth of the Rio Grande, and up that stream to the twenty-fourth meridian, which may be taken as the western boundary line, although it is gradually extending westward, especially in Nebraska and Dakota, some having been found even in Wyoming, and they have been successfully transplanted into Colorado. The forty-fifth parallel appears to be about their northern boundary line in the extreme Northwest. It then bears southward toward the Great Lakes, including Southern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, crossing into Canada near the lower end of Lake Huron, and continuing eastward through the Province

of Ontario and the State of New York to the beginning. Some birds are found beyond these limits, but they are too rare to be specially sought for by sportsmen. In Ontario they do not appear to be found so far north as formerly, while in Dakota they are spreading to the north as well as to the west. They have been occasionally transplanted into Maine, and being liberated in the spring, good broods would be reared; but few would survive the following winter, being exterminated more by the deep snows than by the excessive cold.

Bob Whites are found in Mexico, in the States of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas, and even farther south, being said by good authorities to extend down to the Balize. They are also abundant in Cuba, though I have never heard of them in any of the other West India Islands. The Cuban bird is, by some naturalists, made a different subspecies. The following description and remarks I received from Dr. H. McHatton, of Macon, Ga., who for many years was a planter and keen sportsman in Cuba: "The Cuban Bob Whites generally pair from April 1st to April 15th; the young furnish good shooting about October 1st. The broods are large, averaging eighteen or twenty. They abound in all cultivated parts of the island, their favorite cover being sugar-cane and hedges, and their favorite food all varieties of grass-seed, especially caldo, santo, and lechosa. They are very numerous, and increase rapidly, and but for heavy storms would overrun the island. While the shooting is done mostly before 10 o'clock a.m. and after 4 o'clock p.m., it is not unusual for an average brace of dogs to find fifteen or twenty coveys in that time.

"Cuba, for several reasons, is probably the best quail-hunting country in America; the climate is all that could be desired; food is abundant all the time; there are very few snakes, no carnivorous animals, except an occasional

stray domestic cat; literally no shooting over dogs, no netting, and very little trapping, the climate and the laws of the land being well calculated to prevent market-hunting. The Cuban bird is, in some respects, different from ours, bearing a close resemblance to the bird of the pine-barrens of Georgia, being smaller than our local bird, and of a deeper color, especially noticeable in the male. He is strikingly red—so deep in this color that no one fails to notice it. In all other respects he is the same old Bob White. The hunting is done principally in the morning. I usually stopped at 9, and never hunted later than 10 a. m. In the Partido de Cabezas, where I lived, the number of birds killed depended on the number I could use. In the fall, the best hunting is on the cattle-ranches and old fields. By January the cane on the plantations is pretty well cut off, and in February and March the hunting there is simply unequaled, there being just enough cover for the birds to lie well, and nothing to obstruct the shooting. There is one method of hunting, and quite a destructive one it is, in vogue among the *guajiros* (peasants). As I have never seen it in any other place, it may prove of interest. Nearly all the plantations are divided by hedges, and these, in that tropical climate, soon become impenetrable thickets of briars and vines; the birds, of course, are found in abundance in reach of this cover. The guajiro has a black-and-tan dog, or common fice, trained to run into the coveys and bark. If the birds are near a hedge, they tree instead of lighting on the ground. The dog gets under them, and keeps up a continuous barking. The guajiro, armed with a pole ten or twelve feet long, with a small wire snare at the end, will often clean up an entire covey in a very few minutes."

Some time since I prepared numerous questions about Bob Whites, which I had printed in circular form and

sent out to several hundred sportsmen in the United States and British Possessions. I did this because I desired to obtain the opinions of practical sportsmen on the subject, to eke out the information which I had acquired through my own observation as to the habits of Bob White. As the greater number of those applied to were utter strangers to me, it was rather a presumptuous proceeding, but I relied upon that bond of sympathy which exists between all true sportsmen, and my faith in the brotherhood was not misplaced. The answers came in from every direction, and nearly all showed a desire to communicate accurate and trustworthy information. I beg to reiterate here, to each and all, the thanks which I returned as the answers were received. Two hundred and seventy-six sportsmen responded. The answers to some of the questions I have tabulated, and taken in some places the average, in others giving the different views, pro and con, on various disputed points. Many would leave one or more questions unanswered, or would not answer positively, consequently the footings I give do not show the total number of persons from whom I received answers. The summary is as follows: The number reared in an average brood is thirteen. One hundred and twenty-eight who answer say that two broods are frequently reared by a pair of birds in one season, while eighty-eight deny it. One hundred and eighty credit the cock with assisting the hen in setting, while fifty do not. Twenty-six say that Bob White migrates, one hundred and forty-five deny it, and forty-nine say that he does so to a limited extent. Ninety-five believe that he has the power to withhold his scent at will, seventy-seven say not, and thirty give what I believe is the true explanation, as hereinafter mentioned. Seventy-six prefer the pointer, one hundred and fourteen the setter, and many like both. Where the kind of setter is mentioned, it is

nearly always the English; some few prefer the Irish, and two or three the black-and-tan, or so-called Gordon. One hundred and thirty-eight believe that Bob Whites are decreasing, sixty-seven say increasing, and twenty believe that he is just holding his own in numbers. The average gun and charge is a twelve-gauge, weighing seven and one-half pounds, with thirty-inch barrels, either cylinder or slightly choked, loaded with three and one-half drams of powder, and one and one-eighth ounces of shot. The average number of coveys found in a day by an average brace of dogs is nine, out of which an average shot bags twenty birds, killing 53 per cent. of his shots.

The time when Bob Whites disband their coveys, and separate into pairs, depends largely on the weather. If it has been mild and pleasant, they of course mate much earlier than when it is cold and inclement. I have on several occasions seen coveys break into pairs, and then, upon the weather becoming cold and stormy, reassemble into coveys. I am of the opinion that they select their mates sometime before they separate from the covey. May 1st appears to be about the usual time for pairing in the North, and the 20th of April in the extreme South. This year (1889) we had a remarkably early spring. I have watched the birds carefully, and as a rule they paired about April 15th, some remaining in coveys a fortnight later.

The Bob Whites build their nests on the ground, in some slight depression, among weeds, grass, or stubble, avoiding bare ground on the one hand, and dense and heavy undergrowth and cover on the other. The nest is meagrely lined, if at all, and therein the hens lay from ten to eighteen eggs—the smaller number being probably laid by birds in their first season, or by those of advanced years and decreasing fecundity. There are occasions when

more birds than one will lay in the same nest, as is done by the domestic guinea-hen and some other birds. I have been told by close observers that in such cases there was but one male, which was acting a Mormon's part; but of this I can not speak of my own knowledge. I am confident, however, that more than one hen will lay in the same nest. The eggs are pure white, and a blunt oval in shape. The period of incubation is variously given, but it is most probably twenty-one days.

It has been a mooted question whether the cock assists the hen in sitting on the eggs. I have several times seen the cock-bird on the nest, and there are those in whom I have the utmost confidence who state that they have repeatedly seen it. One especially close observer, and a trustworthy man, informs me that he watched several nests, and that in each and every case the hen-bird sat during the night. Early in the morning she would leave the nest in care of the cock. He would sit on it for an hour or two, until the hen returned from search of food, then she would sit till the latter part of the afternoon, when he would again relieve her for a similar period, she returning to the nest a little before sundown. I do not know that this routine is invariably adopted, but that the cock-bird does assist the hen in hatching the eggs, I have not the least doubt. When the weather is very warm, both birds will sometimes vacate the nest for an hour or two at noon.

The young birds, when hatched, are tiny things, but Nature has thrown many safeguards around them for their protection. A wonderful power of concealment, the vigilance of their parents, and the instinct, or rather reasoning power, which causes the hen to act as if she were crippled, and thereby draw the intruder away from her infant brood, are among the most beautiful of Nature's provisions for the protection of the weak and helpless.

The time at which the young are large enough to afford sport varies greatly, being regulated, of course, by the period at which their parents mated. They are occasionally large enough by the first of September, frequently so at the beginning of October, but I think that probably none should be shot until November 1st, for while I, on one occasion, saw a covey of young birds on April 1st which were quite large and able to fly well, I have, on the other hand, seen many broods late in October of which I doubted the ability to survive the loss of their parents. The opening of the season should be postponed until all, or nearly all, are not only large enough to take care of themselves, but have sufficient strength of wing to test the marksman's skill, and a sufficient accumulation of flesh to tempt the epicure. Nothing is more detestable than going out early in the season to butcher fluttering "cheepers," and thereby gratify the miserable desire to make a big bag. Anybody can do this if he is willing to make his dog suffer from the heat, and degrade his own manhood; it is no test of sportsmanship.

The food of Bob Whites depends largely upon the locality which they frequent and the season of the year. In the North, buckwheat seems to be their favorite food; in the South, the corn-field pea. All small grains are eagerly sought for—Indian corn, the seed of sorghum, and of many weeds. The small varieties of mast they swallow whole, and I have found in the crops of many birds parts of large acorns, which they had either broken up themselves or found broken by hogs or other agency. They are largely insectivorous. In the South, sometimes, in the early fall, they feed upon the cotton-worm, when those pests are abundant, to such an extent as to give an unpleasant flavor to the flesh. There is no bird which does the farmer less harm and more good than the Bob White. Whatever grain he takes, it is not missed, while

he destroys innumerable noxious insects and weed-seeds. It is said that he is very fond of the tiny seeds of the Japan clover, which has of late years spread over our section of the country; but I have never been able to verify this by my own observation. In the spring, when the mast is gone and seeds have generally decayed or sprouted, the Bob White eats various young weeds. The favorite cover of Bob White is stubble, weed-fields, broom-sedge, and grass. When flushed or frightened, they fly to the thickets, especially the brush along streams, and are generally found within a few hundred yards of some such coverts, which causes many to believe that they look upon water as a matter of prime necessity; this I am somewhat inclined to doubt, for the following reason: In September, 1884, I went on a bear-hunt to what is known as the Nueces Cañon, which runs through Uvalde and other counties in the southwestern portion of Texas. It was during a severe drought. Water was to be found only on the Nueces River and a few of its tributaries, and while the cattle had eaten all the grass within several miles of the stream along part of our road, in other places we found it quite abundant, because the cattle would not go so far from water to graze upon it, and yet in those very places I saw more Bob Whites than I ever saw before or since. They were just as abundant miles from water as they were upon the banks of the stream. The country was so dry and elevated that there was no dew. We could leave our guns out in the open air all night, and they would not gather a particle of rust. The only solution I could give of this, was either that the birds could do without water or that they must quench their thirst from the "prickly pears" (fruit of the cacti) which abound in that section. My limited time, and my desire to secure larger, not nobler, game, prevented me from making a close investigation into this.

I believe that the number of birds reared in a brood is overestimated by many, who place it as high as eighteen or twenty. In the first place, the number of eggs found in a nest will not justify this, if you allow for the probable loss between the hatching and the maturing of the broods; moreover, if you will go out early in the season, when the coveys have not been reduced in number, and flush a covey where you can watch them closely, you will soon be able to satisfy yourself that a dozen is a liberal estimate for an average covey, and from this the two parents are to be deducted.

There has been much discussion as to whether or not a pair of birds rear more than one brood in a season. Many believe and stoutly assert that they rear two, and sometimes three. I doubt the correctness of this conclusion except in rare and exceptional cases. If the nest is destroyed, they will frequently lay again, but not otherwise. Many base their opinion that a second brood is reared upon the fact that birds of different sizes are found in the same covey. We have all seen this, but I believe, if we had watched closely, we would have generally found at least three parent birds among them. Last season I watched closely all coveys containing both large and small birds—in such cases I never shoot into them—and almost without exception I could see three or four birds which I thought were a year or more older than the rest of the covey. The fact that some birds are hatched early in June, and others late in October, will not sustain the supposition of those who believe that two broods are reared by one pair. In hunting deer we frequently find fawns well able to care for themselves early in July, and again we find them small and helpless as late as November, and yet we know that it is a physical impossibility for deer to breed twice in one summer. It is simply a natural phenomenon which appears in all animate creation.

The Bob Whites which have been transplanted into Colorado, I am informed, do certainly breed twice, and it may be also true for Florida, but I do not believe that it will apply to the great proportion of the territory where the birds are found. At my ranch, I have a small field which is separated by several miles of dense woods from any other open land frequented by Bob Whites. The birds on this place are well protected in the breeding-season, and the nests carefully located. These pairs rear only one brood each. Last year the high water destroyed several nests; some of these birds nested again, but not all of them. Knowing the number of nests, and watching all the coveys reared on the place, I am positive that no pair reared more than one brood. There was one large covey of young which varied greatly in size. I flushed it repeatedly, and there were at least three old birds, two of them being hens. While my own observation leads me to believe that only one brood is reared in each season by a pair, I hesitate to assert this positively, for the contrary view is held by so many whose opportunities for knowing the facts are equally as good as my own. Dogmatic assertions should in all such matters be carefully avoided.

Another disputed question is whether or not Bob White is a migratory bird. If we except what is called the "running season" in some of the Middle States, Bob Whites are certainly non-migratory. Overflows, forest fires, and scarcity of food will occasionally drive them from their accustomed haunts, but they rarely go farther than a few miles. We can not speak of them as migratory in the sense that the snipe, woodcock, plover, wild fowl, and other birds are migratory. The seasons neither time their movements nor control the direction of them; it might as well be said that a man migrates to his office for business, to the restaurant for his luncheon, to the theatre

for amusement, and to his own fireside for home comfort and enjoyment. That entertaining but most inaccurate writer, Herbert, in his anxiety to miscall the bird a quail, used his utmost endeavors to prove that it was migratory. In this section, the birds frequently leave the fields in October or November, when the grain and weed-seeds appear to be exhausted, and stay in the woods, especially when there is a good mast. If the mast is an utter failure, they go to the woods only in bitterly cold weather, and not always then. Under no circumstances do they go more than a mile or two from where they were reared, and in January or February they return. Where your dogs found a covey in October, you may expect to find them again in February. Some writers have claimed that while Bob Whites were always found in particular localities, this did not prove the birds to be non-migratory; for, they claimed, new coveys were continually taking the place of those which preceded them in a general movement in some particular direction. The incorrectness of this opinion is demonstrated by the fact that certain coveys have peculiarities, and that the birds found at that particular place will, during the entire season and for successive seasons, act in the same manner; for instance, I have known coveys which, when flushed, would fly into trees and perch there, and this they would do time and again, and year after year, thereby demonstrating that they were the same birds which were always found at that particular spot.

Many claim that Bob Whites have the power of withholding their scent at will. This is an error, and here again we find Herbert using his undoubted talents in a misdirection. To the casual observer, it would appear that they have this power, but a closer investigation will enable one better to understand the phenomenon. If you will take a musty, moth-eaten fur rug and move it across

the room, it will give out an unpleasant odor; but if you take it into the open air, shake it violently for several minutes, then wrap it up into a small compass and put it under some article of furniture in the same room, your olfactories will not be able to detect its presence. It is so with Bob Whites; when flushed, their rapid motion through the air dissipates the scent, and sometimes they will plunge into thick grass or cover, press themselves closely against the ground, fold their wings tightly to their bodies, and appear hardly to breathe; then, until they move, it is difficult for the dogs to smell them. But these instances are rare; as a general rule, when the bird alights, he moves enough to give forth scent. Herbert, and others, who advise novices to hold up their dogs for a considerable space of time, are misled. In some cases it will be well, but far oftener it will cause useless delay. If your dogs are good, and the day be an average one for scent, mark your birds down and go promptly to them. If you delay too long, the birds will run together again, and you will merely get another covey rise. That the Bob White does this because he is frightened and wishes to conceal himself from the eye of the hunter, not from the nose of the dog, I believe, for two reasons. First, if they had this power and knowledge, we should have to steal upon them unaware to secure a point; and, secondly, we find this phenomenon most frequent where the birds have been flushed and scattered by hawks, whose keen sight, not scenting powers, they dread.

No men know better than our field-trial handlers what a bird-dog can do, and none are better informed about Bob Whites; and anyone who has ever judged at field trials, will readily testify to the vexatious, but rather excusable, manner in which these handlers will rush their dogs to secure points on birds just flushed and scattered, in order to earn thereby valuable prizes, and

to add to the reputation of their dogs. Dogs with poor noses are largely responsible for the idea that Bob Whites can withhold their scent at will. When Harry Archer said that these birds close the pores of their skins, and thereby withhold the scent, he should have referred to his dog's nose as being closed.

The future of our game animals and birds causes the thoughtful sportsman much anxiety. Whether we look backward or forward, the result is the same. The buffalo is practically extinct; the elk can be reached by but few, and deer and wild turkeys are now unknown in sections where they were once superabundant. The annual flights of wild fowl are yearly less and less. From the answers received to my inquiries, it appears that Bob Whites are also, as a general rule, decreasing alarmingly in numbers, and this is especially to be regretted; for, from the nature and habits of the birds, they can be made to increase, even in densely settled farming districts; but to do this is not a matter of a day nor a year. Good game laws are, of course, most essential; but game laws are mere dead letters unless they are supported by public sentiment, and not only actively enforced by prominent sportsmen, but also closely observed by them. This is what I mean: I know many sportsmen who would not think of shooting Bob Whites out of season, who are earnest in their efforts to protect them, and yet will, on occasions, violate the law for the protection of some other kind of game, thereby destroying whatever influence they may have for good. The sportsman should observe all game laws; he should learn and obey the laws of the land, no matter how unjust and unwise he may think some particular clauses to be, for if he violates one, the market-hunter and bag-maker will violate them all; and he should observe even still more closely the laws of Dame Nature, and under no circumstances molest

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the breeding and undeveloped game. There is a wide discrepancy of opinion as to what period should be embraced in the closed season for Bob Whites. It must depend to some extent upon the locality, and also upon their abundance, and even upon the number of shooters who pursue them. Where they are plentiful, and there are but few who hunt them, nearly all the non-breeding period can be made an open season, beginning with the time when the young birds are old enough to furnish sport, and ending with the commencement of the mating-season say from the 1st of October until the 1st of April. This is the law in my State, and in this immediate vicinity Bob Whites are not decreasing to any marked extent; still the open season is too long. The heat and heavy cover, and the immaturity of many of the birds, make it better that the season should open November 1st. It should not extend beyond March 15th, and it would perhaps be well, in this latitude, to close it March 1st—that is, let the open season be the months of November, December, January, and February. This would give only four months' shooting, but it would enable us, like well-conducted banks, to accumulate a reserve fund, rather than, like reckless spendthrifts, to overdraw our accounts and become bankrupt. Where birds have become scarce, and the sportsmen are very numerous, it is necessary that the open season be short. The reports I have received from Indiana go to show that Bob Whites have rather increased in that State, owing in part to the mild winters, and partly to a well-enforced game law, which has only from October 15th to December 20th as an open season. In extreme cases, the absolute protection of Bob Whites for several years has been found most beneficial. This appears to be the case in the Province of Ontario. From persistent shooting and hard winters, the birds had become too scarce to furnish sport. They

were protected for three years, and I am informed that last season they were plentiful, and sport was excellent.

The exact features of the law should be adapted to the wants of the State which enacts it, and due attention must be paid to all the rights, and even to some of the prejudices, of the community. Game laws are too often considered as intended to benefit the town and "dude" sportsmen, and as inimical to the farmer. This is to be deplored. Proper game laws, well executed, are more beneficial to the farmers and the farmer sportsmen than to any other class. It enables them to realize a source of revenue from the game found on their farms, if they so desire, and it secures to the farmer sportsmen game near at hand —a most desirable thing for them, for they, as a rule, do not visit distant sections in the pursuit of game. The law which enables a man to post his property and prevent trespassing is most desirable; for, while game birds are the property of no one, still the owner of inclosed premises should have the right to say who may hunt and fish thereon. It seems to me that a gentleman would as soon intrude in another's parlor as in his field, and such instrusions should be met alike in both cases. There are but few farmers who object to the proper persons hunting on their lands.

Non-export laws are excellent. The absolute prohibition of shooting Bob Whites for the market is desirable. The destruction of their eggs and netting or trapping them should be prohibited at all seasons of the year. These and other provisions can be inserted, care being taken, however, not to make the law obnoxious. The penalty should not be too heavy. If you put it at $5 or $10 for ordinary shooting out of season, you can get local courts and juries to convict; and this penalty, if imposed and collected, will be amply sufficient, especially where the ever-present court costs are attached. If you make the

penalty too heavy, you practically kill the law. It is a good idea to provide that the fine shall go to the public school fund of the nearest municipal subdivision to which it can be legally applied. It will enable the prosecuting attorney to paint the game-butcher in dark colors, while, on the other hand, he can hold up before the jury the bright-eyed little children who will be benefited by the fine assessed. Sportsmen should impress upon their law-makers the necessity for game laws. The ambitious young aspirant for the legislature is ever open to arguments of this sort. Sportsmen, as a rule, are active, intelligent, and influential men, and they can do much in this line. I don't mean that the sportsmen shall organize a sportsmen's political party—that is not necessary; but look after your candidates in nominating conventions and primary elections. In a certain county, there was an officer who had for years paid undue attention to the views of certain poachers. He was otherwise an excellent man, but he was not educated up to the proper standard on the subject of game protection. The sportsmen proper had generally supported him with their votes and influence, but finally they wearied of his diplomacy, and he was speedily convinced that the votes of a score of poachers were not equivalent to the active, intelligent opposition he would meet from the sportsmen of his county, some of whom could control alone more than a score of votes. Game protection is practical, and we should look at it as practical men, not as sentimentalists. If we throw the proper safeguards around our game birds, they will be with us for many years to come—a constant source of delight and pleasure. Rewards offered for the destruction of vermin and birds of prey, would conduce greatly to the protection of our game birds; but our legislatures are slow to adopt such measures. Sportsmen's clubs can, however, do much good in this direction,

not only by offering such rewards as they can afford to pay, but by having side-hunts, in which the object shall not be to disgrace themselves by striving to see who can most worthily wear the title of game-butcher, but by each endeavoring to be foremost in the destruction of furred, feathered, and scaled pot-hunters.

In the foregoing remarks, I have treated of the habits of Bob Whites as I have found them, and as they have been reported to me by intelligent, practical sportsmen, but I have spoken only indirectly of the pursuit of them as game birds, and the proper means and methods for doing so. The choice you will make here will depend very largely upon the kind of man you are. I write this for sportsmen, not for the game-butcher, whose idea of a successful day's sport is the number of birds bagged, whose gun is prized simply in proportion to its capacity for exterminating game, and who esteems his dog merely for the number of birds he can find, point, and retrieve, regardless of the manner in which it is done. To this miscalled sportsman I have nothing to say, but I address the true sportsman, the one who enjoys a day's sport not so much for the destruction of life as for the pleasure he derives from each and every incident connected with it. This is the kind of man one should select as a companion for a day's shooting on Bob Whites. Let him be a man who observes closely, compares and analyzes the habits and characteristics of game birds, and of everything that pertains to sportsmanship; not a dull, dry fellow, but one in whose nature there is something of the poet; who is a mental, moral, and physical epicure; who can enjoy the ranging of his dog, the clean execution of his gun, the swift flight of the bird, its wondrous instincts for self-preservation, his companion's skill and success, and everything connected with sportsmanship, with an intense satisfaction, which he feels and appreciates at the

moment, as does the epicure who presses some savory viand to his palate, or the connoisseur of wine, as he leisurely enjoys the rich bouquet and fruity flavor of some ancient vintage; or even as the strong, vigorous man who feasts his eyes on the delicate beauty and refined grace of purest womanhood. This is the spirit with which the sportsman should enter into his pleasures. Secure such a man for your companion if you can, and strive hard that he may have such a one in you.

The next essential is not the gun, but the dog. The gun is merely a machine or insensate instrument in your hands, but the dog is more. He not only contributes to your sport, but he enjoys it himself. A good dog is more than a servant; he is a pleasant companion, a tried and trusted friend. For the pursuit of Bob Whites, sportsmen are divided in their choice. Many prefer the pointer, others the setter, while some are admirers equally of both. I, like others, have my preference, but I believe that the best of either strain are of about equal merit, and are good enough for any man. In selecting a bird-dog, the prime requisites are, of course, intelligence, disposition, nose, endurance, speed, and courage; but there is another quality which he should possess to a high degree, and that is the one commonly called "style" —a quality peculiar to the dog that is graceful in motion and handsome on point; whose drawing on game is in itself a display of beauty, and which, while working single birds, will spring from point to point in a quick, accurate manner; who retrieves with an appearance of absolute pleasure, not going after the dead birds like a lazy boy sent on a disagreeable errand. This trait can be had in either the pointer or the setter. He may not give any more points than an ugly brute, who, full of bird sense, goes with wonderful accuracy from covey to covey, and trots around among the scattered birds in a slouch-

ing, tramp-like manner; he may not even give so many points, but an hour with such a dog is worth a week over the other. The Zulu savage and the Indian buck prize their wives largely for their capacity for manual labor and their coarser physical powers, but the educated man of to-day wishes something more than a mere beast of burden for his household companion. Civilization has developed his greed and egotism until he thinks himself worthy of that which is noblest on earth—a beautiful, refined, and educated woman. So the true sportsman should be with his dog. This kind of dog is difficult to obtain, but by careful selection it is obtainable.

Look well to the qualities of your dog's ancestors, as they exhibited them in the field. Probably you can not see many of them yourself; look, then, to the records of our field trials, which have done more to develop the good qualities of our bird-dogs than any other one thing; but don't look to the bench-show records, for there you will get but little information which is useful, and much that is worse than useless. If you can do so, breed and train your dog yourself—he will then be more a part and parcel of you; but if you can not, procure him from some breeder of reputation and reliability, and have him well and thoroughly trained; then keep him so. Carefully correct every sin, whether of omission or commission, with gentle but positive firmness. Don't get into a tempest of passion, and be guilty of brutally mistreating your dog, but correct all faults until the habit of obedience gets firmly fixed. Give your dog all the experience possible, as without it, no matter how fine his natural qualities, and how thoroughly he may have been drilled in the yard, he will not be a first-class field-dog. See, too, that his physical condition is perfect. Nothing irks the true sportsman more than to see some ignoramus expecting first-class work of a good dog, which is either in bad

health, or else overloaded with fat and in soft flesh. Last, but by no means least, get your dog's confidence and affection, and let him have your own. Such a dog as I have described is well worthy of it—more so, perhaps, than some of the men in whose society you take pleasure. Until your dog is thoroughly educated and trained, let the number of birds bagged be a matter of secondary importance. No sportsman is likely to have a thoroughly trained dog unless he can enjoy leaving his gun at home, and with whip and whistle work his dogs, while some friend does the shooting.

After your dog is thoroughly trained, with the habit of obedience firmly fixed (I again use the expression, for it seems to me to express exactly the idea which I wish to convey), you can enjoy yourself fully in pursuit of Bob Whites, undisturbed by the many petty vexations which are entailed upon a sportsman by the use of half-trained dogs. A man can hardly overestimate the good qualities of a first-class field-dog, but there are men who fail properly to appreciate our canine friends. In my kennel-yard there is a modest little tomb, covered by the twining vines of the honey-suckle, which also coil around a marble monument, upon which is chiseled the name of a faithful pointer, whose remains are buried beneath it. This tribute of respect to a dumb animal occasionally elicits expressions of surprise from some of those who see it. It is a matter of regret to me, that I can not read to them a poem which I read many years ago, and enjoyed intensely, but which I have never been able to find again. It was to me full of pathos. A man of strange appearance, travel-stained and worn, entered the studio of a famous Grecian sculptor. He was accompanied by a noble dog, which, like his master, showed the effects of age and want. The stranger, drawing from his ragged vestments a precious stone, graven with a

device of Eastern royalty, asked the sculptor if he would take it as a fee for carving a statue of the dog. The great man scornfully replied that he would not degrade his genius to perpetuate the memory of a beast. The visitor then told his tale. It was of kingly birth and wealth, of rebellion and bitter treachery. He told how his subjects had revolted, his friends had betrayed, and even the wife of his bosom had deserted him, but how, through all, the faithful dog stood by his master; and he closed his pathetic appeal with these words:

> "Ay! stranger, but a dog, a beast;
> But of all earth's creatures not the least."

The sculptor bowed his head, and made due apology. He declined to take the jewel, but in his city, for many centuries, could be seen the choicest product of his chisel—a faithful likeness of the noble dog.

In selecting a gun, I would use the advice of Polonius to his son about dress. Let it be as "costly as your purse can buy," with justice to your other wants and necessities; adapt it, also, to your strength and skill. No gun for field-shooting should weigh over eight pounds, and from that down to five and a half, according to the gauge. I would earnestly recommend the hammerless, on the ground of both convenience and safety. During one hunting-season, I noticed all the various accounts of hunters who were injured by the accidental discharge of guns, and where sufficient particulars were given, it was evident that fully three-fourths of such accidents would not have happened had the gun been a hammerless. If you can afford but one gun, and shoot wild fowl to any great extent, you may find it necessary to use a ten-gauge gun on Bob Whites, but don't put your duck charges in it. It is not giving the little fellows a fair show. Reduce your ammunition somewhat, shoot in a sportsman-like manner, and don't permit some unreasonable bigot

to call you a boor and butcher because your weapon is so much larger than his little sixteen-gauge. Still, I think that the twelve-gauge is as large as should be used on Bob Whites. If you are an exquisite shot, you can get down as low as a twenty-gauge; that altogether depends upon the individual and his tastes. The gun most generally used is good enough, being a seven and a half pound twelve-gauge. The barrels should be cylinder, or only slightly choked. There is a world of nonsense written about the shooting qualities of guns. The guns of all standard makes shoot about alike. The greater superiority of the finer guns is not in their shooting qualities, but because they are more handsome to look at, handle better, and are much more durable. Get a gun that suits you fairly well, and then stick to it. Changing guns is like changing friends – a risky business. In Bob White shooting, for such a gun as I have mentioned, a charge of three and a half drams of powder and one or one and one-eighth ounces of shot will generally do well; but guns apparently the same will shoot better with different charges. Test your gun thoroughly for pattern and penetration at a rack-target; find out the proper charge, and then stick to that. The smokeless niter powders are especially desirable in field-shooting. The size of shot should be from No. 10 to No. 8; or, rather, No. 8 shot will do the season through as well as any. Some prefer the chilled, others the soft. I could never see any particular difference in their killing powers. The other portion of a sportsman's outfit I will not discuss. Everyone knows what suits him best, and a little experience will teach him what he really needs. Let the lunch-bag be well filled, and the whisky-bottle conspicuously absent. The manner of hunting Bob Whites—or shooting them, if you prefer it—differs widely in various sections. In the

North and East, where the fields are small and the fences difficult to let down, the sportsmen generally go on foot; in the South and West, the hunters usually ride until the coveys are found, and then dismount to work up the scattered birds. This requires the highest type of dog. He is expected to range farther and faster, and consequently to have more endurance, than is necessary in a dog which must keep within sight of a man on foot. He must also be better trained, for he is at one moment required to range far out in search of coveys, and the next he is called to work the ground closely for scattered birds. I do not wish, however, to be understood as saying that the dogs of the South and West are superior to those of the East; being of the same blood, their natural qualities are practically the same; but dogs hunted by mounted sportsmen are not only required to cover more ground, but should also be better trained, as they are not so directly under their handler's control. For this very reason, however, they are frequently not so well trained. They do admirable covey work, but are less steady to wing and shot, and less inclined to work ground closely for scattered birds.

Bob Whites roost at night in a circle, with their heads outward, as if to guard against surprise in every direction. Early in the morning, if the weather is pleasant, they start out to feed, and it is a pleasure to watch a feeding covey, and see the contented industry, and I might almost say the jolly good-nature, with which they search for food. Toward noon their appetites are satisfied, and they will seek some comfortable place for a midday rest. If the day be cold and bleak, they will stop on some sunny southern exposure. If it be hot and sultry, they will seek some cool and shady place. Later in the day they will again start forth to forage, and, if undisturbed, will generally return to their last night's roosting-place.

They occasionally, but by no means always, take wing and fly to the place where they propose to spend the night. This, I believe, is generally done when they have been recently disturbed by foxes or other animals, which trail them up by scent.

Some sportsmen prefer to shoot alone, but a pleasant companion, while he may diminish your bag, should more than double your sport. With rare exceptions, the days when I have shot alone are now overlooked and forgotten, while those spent afield with some chosen friend are treasured up as precious reminiscences, to gladden my heart as I glance back along the mile-stones of the past. On the other hand, some of my most exasperating recollections are of days of so-called sport, where four or five endeavored to shoot together. In shooting, as in love-making, "two is company, but three is a crowd." For this section, I consider the acme of pleasant sport to be had by two friends, well mounted and equipped, with a brace of well-trained, experienced dogs of fine natural qualities, attended by an intelligent, active servant, also well mounted, whose duty it is to carry the bulk of the ammunition, the game and luncheon, to let down fences, mark down birds, and lead up the horses when desirable. This is rather a lazy method, but the man who pursues it from sunrise till dark will have an abundance of exercise; but while this is my preference, I have great respect for the athlete who on foot keeps up with his good dogs throughout the day. It is merely a matter of taste, after all.

I would here suggest that every sportsman keep a diary in which to enter briefly or at length, as he may prefer, an account of each day's sport. He will find it a useful reference and a source of pleasure. It will make him more accurate in his knowledge of the habits of game birds and animals, and benefit him in many other respects.

He should, however, avoid making himself a servant to his diary, and should also, if possible, keep his record accurate and correct. Exaggeration about matters pertaining to field-sports seems to be a weakness peculiar to man, but a sportsman's diary should be as truthful as human nature will permit; otherwise it possesses but little real value.

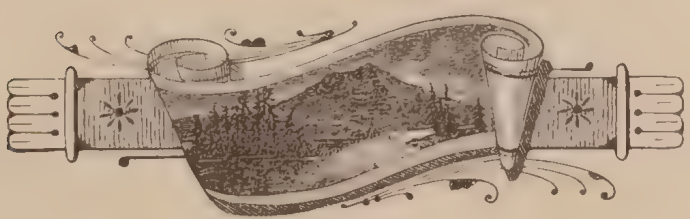
There is a wide difference of opinion among practical sportsmen as to the proper manner of aiming at moving game. I do not know why this is. It may be that with some there is more thorough sympathy and closer connection between the will-power and the nervous system than there is with others. The former resemble the present percussion fire-arms, and discharge their guns simultaneously with aiming; while the latter resemble the old flint-lock pieces, and require more time between the fixing of their aim and firing. The former will advocate the holding on theory, the latter will believe in holding ahead, when, in fact, their shooting is practically the same. Not long since, I went on board a steamboat chartered by a fishing-party. Among the party were two gentlemen who are by many considered to be the best duck-shots in North Louisiana. The proper method of aiming at ducks was discussed. One of these gentlemen was an extreme advocate of holding ahead, while the other, with equal earnestness, insisted that one should hold on, or nearly on, the game. Of course the gun should be so pointed that the line taken by the shot and that traveled by the bird will intersect each other. If the bird is flying either directly to or from you, and getting higher, aim above it. If getting lower, aim beneath it. If crossing to the right or left, aim in front—just how much will depend upon the shooter, and experience only can educate him. No quantity of book-reading can give him this information and skill. I would advise the beginner to avoid snap-

shooting, and to take only the plain and open shots; to take notice how he aims, and observe closely the result. He should, on the other hand, avoid shooting too slowly. As his skill increases, let him undertake to make the more difficult shots with increased quickness, until it is with him automatic to calculate while raising his gun the distance to the bird, and the direction and speed of its flight, and to aim so that the center of his charge will strike it down with reasonable certainty; then he will have the right to consider himself an expert in all Sports Pteriplegistic, so far as marksmanship is concerned.

The distance at which Bob Whites are killed, and the percentage of successful shots, are, I believe, both generally overestimated by sportsmen. Fully two-thirds, if not three-fourths, of the birds bagged are killed under thirty yards. Nearly all the others are brought down under forty yards. Those who kill frequently at sixty and eighty yards, do it in their rocking chairs or on paper; they don't do it in the field. As to the percentage of the killing shots, where the sportsman takes all reasonable chances, shooting in the brush as well as in the open, I believe that 40 per cent. is a fair average. Those of us who have shot a great deal, occasionally make some wonderful scores; these we remember, and rate our skill by them. We forget our "off" days, when we would make a half-dozen consecutive misses. It is with ease that I can recall my runs of fifteen or twenty birds killed clean without a miss, but it requires considerable mental effort to remember the days when my repeated misses made even my good dogs wear an expression of vexation and disgust.

Of all field-sports, the shooting of Bob Whites is the most refined, and the surroundings pertain most closely to civilization. The wild-fowler stands alone amid bleak surroundings; the snipe-shooter must plod his way

through marsh and ooze; the deer-hunter, in the forest, listens for the fierce cry of the savage pack, which he hopes will bring the flying deer to his stand; he who seeks the bear, must follow him through swamps and morass, or through chaparral and cañon —but it is not so with those who would bag Bob Whites. There the surroundings are fields and farms. Intense excitement may be wanting, but there are unbounded opportunities for great pleasure and enjoyment, provided we but educate ourselves to appreciate them; and we should endeavor to assist in educating others, especially the rising generation, who, with active limbs and bright, keen eyes, are to take our places when age and infirmity will cause the fields to know us no more. The boy has no hero worship more devout than for the man whom he believes to be a thorough sportsman. Let us try to be worthy of it, and to inculcate, by act as well as by precept, the principles of true sportsmanship in the lads around us. Let us teach them to look for pleasurable excitement to field-sports, rather than to the gambling-hell, the dance-hall, and the saloon. If we do this much, we shall not have lived in vain; and to accomplish this, I know of no better means than the proper pursuit of that gallant gentleman, our little friend Bob White.



SHARP-TAILED GROUSE.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE, SPRUCE GROUSE, AND PTARMIGANS.

By Walter M. Wolfe ("Shoshone").

OME years ago, a party of sportsmen encamped one evening on the bank of a famous trout-stream in Southern Idaho. For two days they had traveled northward across the desert, wasting ammunition upon sage-hens that were so highly flavored with the rank young shoots of artemisia as to be absolutely unpalatable, and upon jack-rabbits that were also left to the coyotes; but now they were in game-land, on a grassy plateau, beside clear waters fringed with bear-berries and quaking aspens, and all recollections of dust, fatigue, and thirst were lost in anticipation of the morrow.

Daylight found us stirring, and, after a cup of coffee, we started, with approved tackle, to woo the speckled trout. Of course guns were left in camp; our dependence was upon rod and rifle. Scarcely had we gone 100 yards from the tent, when from the thicket in front of us came a whir, and a flock of grouse arose straight in air, and then glided swiftly away, with so slight a motion of the wings that they seemed propelled by some invisible power. The manner of flight, and the loud "cuk, cuk, cuk," were proofs positive that we had something new in the game line, and, as the birds dropped within 200 yards, it took but a few minutes to get the breech-loaders and reach the spot we had marked. When within twenty yards of them they flushed, and we

secured three of the covey. By the time we had brought our birds to camp, I had learned three lessons to load with No. 8 shot instead of with No. 6, to let the birds get well under way before shooting, and, last, but not least, to waste no time in searching for a lost or wounded bird. If no dogs are with the party, the most careful marking will be fruitless.

The preparation of the birds for the frying pan gave us an opportunity to study their distinguishing charac-

teristics. Longer than the pinnated grouse, they are much less compact, and they lack the pointed neck-feathers of the prairie fowl. The tail is long, wedge-shaped, and contains eighteen feathers, the central pair being elongated a full inch beyond the rest. The dense feathering of the tarsi, extending onto the toes, the stout bill, the papillous, naked skin above the eye, bordered externally by feathers, are important marks in the determination of the species. The plumage is unique. Above, a light brown (buff rather than rusty) always predominates over black markings, in bars rather than in spots. The scapulars are marked by broad, elliptical, central spots

of white, and there are similar roundish spots upon the wing-coverts. The head and neck are a brownish buff, which shades into pure white on the breast. On the throat are dusky spots, which, on the breast, become rich brown, V-shaped lines—the conspicuous and distinctive markings of the bird. The feathering of the feet is a pale gray. It took a shorter time to pick the birds than to describe them, and with the drawing came another surprise. Not a tint of sage could be detected, and the crop was full of rose-fruit, wild currants, bear-berries, and other mountain delicacies, thereby proving them to have been dainty feeders. The flesh was light-colored, tender, juicy, and we considered it the choicest of our Rocky Mountain game birds. Such was my introduction to the "white-belly," "willow grouse," and "spotted chicken" of the cow-boy and the mountaineer, the sharp-tailed grouse of the sportsman, and the *Pediœcetes phasianellus columbianus* of the naturalist. The name willow grouse is also applied to the ptarmigans, though they are generally known as white or mountain quail. Similar to the male, but smaller, and with tail-feathers shorter, is the female.

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse is common in the region north of Great Salt Lake and west of the Black Hills. East of the mountains, its place is taken by the prairie sharp-tailed grouse, the rusty color of the latter being the principal specific difference. The sharp-tail of the mountains belongs to the region of the quaking aspens, of purple bear-berries, and of white mountain columbine; to the beautiful valleys that are to be found at an altitude of 6,000 feet, between the sage-brush and the pines, between the home of the cock-of-the-plains and the haunts of the ptarmigans.

With the first signs of spring, long before the leaves appear or the grass is green, the birds fly from the thickets

of pine and cedar where they have passed the winter, and come down to the streams, near which they will live until cold weather again drives them into winter quarters. They do not arrive in families, but in groups — the young males first, then, one by one, the old cocks, heroes of many a battle, and last, the females. No chaperon ever assigned quarters to a camping-party with a greater sense of propriety than is observed by the old hens in selecting a roosting and feeding place for themselves and for the tender pullets. All courtship must be carried on in an open manner, and there must be no peeping behind the scenes, so, for a few days, the sexes remain apart; but, with the warm "chinook," the males tire of their life of celibacy. The papillous membrane over the eye becomes inflamed, and the hens look forth in admiration as their lords strut around the grove in hopes of drawing some mate from the seclusion of the bower; but this method of securing a partner is futile, so the oft-described dance of the grouse comes next upon the programme. In their parades, the males have tramped a smooth place a few yards square, and this they convert into a ball-room. At first only the old birds take part in the exercise. Their neck-feathers are expanded, and, with wings trailed, yet constantly vibrating, they commence with stately measure, now on this side of the circle, now on that, yet always within sight of the object of their devotion. Often they pretend to fight, but their belligerent attitude is assumed only for effect. When one tires, he gives a satisfied cluck, and goes among the hens to secure compliments upon his Chesterfieldian appearance, and then, having satisfied his egotistical emotions, returns to the floor. All this time the younger males survey the stamping-ground with envious eyes. At length, one of the more daring makes a break for a prominent position, and proceeds to emulate his elders. Such an intrusion is not tolerated without a

fight, but if the youngster proves game, and stands his ground, he is soon admitted as an equal, and bows to his *confrères* and to the admiring pullets with as much dignity as though he were an old hand at the business. Only the cowards are kept out of the charmed ring, and these, I believe, go without a mate until another spring; but, like all other good things, the time of courtship must come to an end. One by one the dancers stop their evolutions, one by one they go to the females, and each walks a few times about his inamorata; then, together, the pair leaves the band, and, like Hiawatha and Minnehaha, walks slowly through the forest to make a new home. The dance may last for several days, as all do not participate at one time; but at its close the breeding-season has fairly commenced, and the few males who have not secured mates remain by themselves until the fall pack. Sharp-tailed grouse are rarely, if ever, gregarious, and the male proves a faithful and helpful husband.

As the female feels the maternal instinct, and the time of incubation approaches, she selects a place for a nest—not in the grove of quaking aspens, not among the lordly pines, nor yet among the tall, rank grassès of the upland valleys, but in some thicket of wild roses, in some clump of purple-blossomed arctostaphyllos, where the low-hung foliage forms a perfect screen, she lays her eggs. The place of her choice is not far from a stream. While she is upon the nest the male is never far distant. He is a warrior-sentinel, and, while I do not know that he ever relieves her in her duty, he not infrequently brings her some dainty morsel that he has picked up on his rambles. The nest is a rude affair, constructed of coarse grasses and dried leaves scratched together, sometimes in a slight depression, but more frequently upon the level ground. From twelve to fifteen eggs are deposited. They are

olive-green in color, speckled with a rich dark-brown. In size they are slightly larger than the eggs of the prairie chicken, and are longer, proportionally, than are those of the ruffed grouse.

Late in April in the southern Snake River country, and by the middle of May or the first of June north of the Cœur d'Alene, the young brood is hatched, and at this time a coolness arises upon the part of the male. He does not desert the hen until the young are able to fly, but he remains at a respectful distance. The downy young are a bright buffy yellow, the upper parts tinged reddish, and coarsely marbled with black; the fore part of the head all around is immaculate, and a small black spot is apparent on the middle of the crown. Before they are able to fly, the mother resorts to every artifice to prevent the discovery of her brood. In her tricks she closely resembles the partridge. As best suits her purpose, she sulks through the bushes or rises and flies away with a loud whir, and then, when danger is past, she rejoins her offspring, and calls them together with cluck and action of the barn-yard fowl. As they grow older, the rusty plumage of the back becomes a darker brown, spotted and barred with black and conspicuously streaked with white, and the lower parts change to a dull white, spotted with dusky. Not until after their first moult do the clear-cut, V-shaped markings become prominent.

During May, June, and July, the chicks thrive and fatten. From their mother they acquire a fearless disposition, that prompts them, when disturbed, to draw themselves close to the ground rather than to seek safety in flight; and so closely do they resemble in hue the mountain vegetation, that it takes sharp eyes to discover them when once the buffy down of infancy is lost. The female, while incubating, will suffer herself to be almost trodden upon before she will leave her nest, and were it

not for her sparkling eyes, she would seldom, if ever, be discovered.

Were sportsmen's ethics in the mountains what they should be, the birds would not be hunted before the middle of August, at which time, if the reader will, we shall take a trip for them. Our weapons must be a gun for grouse, a rifle for deer, bears, and other large game, and rods suitable for trout or salmon, according as we camp by brook, river, or lake. For this early shooting a light 16-gauge breech-loader is just the thing, and the shells should be loaded with 3½ drams of powder and an ounce of No. 10 shot. Heavier charges and No. 8, or even No. 6, shot will do late in the autumn; but in summer shooting the birds will make only short flights, and they will never rise until they are compelled to do so. The straight rise and straight-away flight give the sportsman ample opportunity for covering them, and his trouble will be that he peppers the young and tender fowl so full of pellets that they are difficult to pluck and clean, and are much more liable to spoil.

Sharp-tailed grouse being one of the principal objects of our expedition, we must have a team of good pointers —dogs that will range freely, and that, when a bird has dropped, will not quickly give up the search for it. In these altitudes, a setter is much more apt to get out of condition than is a pointer; and the long, arid deserts that must be traversed, from stream to stream, tell upon the constitution of a water-loving dog.

No matter whether our route be from the south or the east, we must cross a hot, dusty, sage-covered desert in coming into Southern Idaho—a region that tries the tempers of the best of friends; but game-land is just ahead, and the green tints and white patches that cover the mountain-sides become hourly more distinct, and at last, late in the hot summer afternoon, we reach our destination.

It is a level park, four or five acres in extent, covered with rich grasses that reach the backs of our horses. About three sides of the camping-ground is a brook, clear as crystal, save where it dashes into white spray amid rocks and riffles, and cold as the snow-banks whence it springs. The fourth side is a bluff, and beyond this the plateau stretches away to the mountains. The brook is girt with willows and other shrubbery, and upon it open cañons, where the trembling aspen grows and where the black-tailed deer rests during the heat of the day. Peaks, capped with eternal snow, seem almost within rifle-shot, and just below the snow-line are forests of pine. Horses are soon hobbled or picketed, the tent is set up, a string of trout is caught; then supper and bed-time crowd on apace, and hardly have we fallen into a good sound sleep ere another morning is upon us, and we arise with the matin-song of the warblers. Lest our occupations become monotonous, we divide, after breakfast, into three parties —one with rifles to go up among the quaking aspens, another to explore the stream with rod and reel, and the third, with guns and dogs, to beat the thickets for birds. During our stay here it will be a poor repast at which we do not sit down to broiled venison steak, fried grouse, speckled trout, with an occasional teal or widgeon, and to sauces of wild currants or gooseberries, stewed "sarvice-berries," and sweet black-caps; but it is hardly time to discuss supper, as we start out after breakfast, ready for the work of the day, lightly clad in suits of canvas. We wear thick-soled, laced shoes in preference to boots, as we have no climbing. The grouse will fly up and down stream, but not across the bluffs on either side. Unless they scatter in the aspens, our path will be as level as a floor. Crossing the brook, our dogs range well, and we follow at an easy pace. Suddenly they catch the scent, wheel, and slowly advance toward a

dense thicket, where they stiffen to a dead point. There is no hurry. The birds are young, and this is their first interview with dog or man. They do not run or try to hide—just squat composedly, as though believing that we could overlook them; but, alas! their cunning is fatal. We get close to them before they are flushed, and then, as they sail away, give them the contents of four barrels. It takes but a glance to mark them down, as their flight is unwavering. The dogs will get the dead; let us look after the cripples. There is one that is winged; it no longer resorts to its old tactics, but hurries away, as fast as its legs will carry it, to the shelter of some tussock. Another is crawling under some leaves, and its brown back is so deceptive that we look twice before we can be sure of our eyes.

Five birds are bagged, and now we hear the cluck of the mother as she calls her brood about her. Once more we advance. This time they are more wary, but still we get within thirty yards before they rise; and now the dogs have a stronger scent, which they follow for some distance. They flush a covey of males, who are in the vicinity of the females and chickens, though they do not associate with them. They are more easily disturbed, rise higher, and fly faster than did the others, though they are not difficult to hit, nor do they carry away the lead when they are wounded. A very slight injury brings them to the ground, and the only trouble is that, when winged, they go farther than do the young to find a place of concealment.

There would be no sense in killing more birds than we can dispose of in camp, so we let a dozen suffice, and return to camp before the fishermen have fairly begun their work.

Such is hunting the sharp-tailed grouse; and just so numerous and so tame will they be found in all these

upland valleys. Up to this time their food has been of the most tempting and delicate kind, and this makes them a treat for the epicure; but, unfortunately, they are very tender birds, and, no matter how carefully packed, will not bear transportation as well as do most similar species.

With September, berries and green shoots fail, and then they eat cedar-berries, pine-nuts, and other articles of similar flavor, until their flesh reminds one of spruce gum; but this taste is not disagreeable, nor do they ever become so saturated with the rank essential oils that are to be found in their winter food as do the sage-hens.

Snow falls early in these mountains, and, with the first squall, there is another change in their mode of life. All the birds, old and young, male and female, assemble in large packs, and select some place for passing the winter. They do not come from different sections in a migratory wave, but those families that have spent the summer here and there along some stream, all assemble near its head-waters and choose a camping-ground. This is generally among the evergreens, where they can find food and shelter beneath the decumbent branches. The winter plumage now appears, and, though the birds grow exceedingly wild, they will not allow themselves to be separated when once the pack has been formed. The males appear much more gray in winter than in summer, and so nearly are the V-shaped markings obliterated that the male and the female seem to belong to different species, especially as the sexes, when in the pack, do not mingle, but each keeps its own side of the yard. During the winter season they roost upon the pine-branches, and on very cold days, unless a storm is threatening, prefer not to leave their perches. At this time the usually wary bird may be shot from the boughs, and sometimes three or four shots may be fired before the flock flies away.

Such instances are, however, very rare. They are usually off with the first sign of danger, but they will not go so far that they can not easily return to the same perch that they left. The pot-hunter can now secure all the birds he can carry by driving them away from the yard, and then concealing himself in a thicket. The birds will return at dusk, if not before, and all night long the hunter may blaze away among the trees, and thus secure a large bag. After dark the grouse will scarcely change position, only move from limb to limb as they are disturbed by flashes from below, or by the fall of some slain companion from a higher branch. This murderous method is worthy of an Indian, but not of any sportsman.

In common with *Pediœcetes phasianellus campestris* of the prairies, the sharp-tail of the mountains burrows in the snow, and can travel quite rapidly beneath its surface when it imagines itself in danger from an enemy. In the same way, if the thicket does not afford sufficient protection from a storm, it buries itself until the blizzard is over. Once in awhile, a sudden freeze forms such a crust over the soft snow that the birds are imprisoned; they will then make long tunnels, in hope of escape, though sometimes they perish in the attempt.

The prairie sharp-tail is found in our northern tier of States and Territories, between Lake Superior and the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. It may be found in Western Nebraska and in Eastern Wyoming and Colorado, as far south as the New Mexico line; but as the prairie chicken increases with the advent of the farmer, so does the sharp-tail disappear; and as the well-watered valleys where it thrives are the first lands to be homesteaded by the settler, it is now a rarity, excepting in Eastern Montana and Dakota. The rusty or ochraceous ground-color of the upper parts is the most apparent

specific difference, and the eggs of the prairie sharp-tail are a trifle shorter than are those of her mountain sister.

It can not be supposed that during the whole of our excursion we devote ourselves to the sharp-tail. Guides and cow-boys have told us strange tales about the "fool-hen," that lives among the pine and spruce, above the white-leaved poplars, close to the snow-belt. If such a bird exists, we must find it, and hence a hunt for the

SPRUCE GROUSE.

This bird belongs to the genus *Dendragapus*, which is well represented in the Northern United States and throughout British America. The *Dendragapi* are divided into two families. The first of these is distinguished by a tail of twenty feathers, and the sides of the neck are, in the male, with distinct inflatable air-sacs. Its members live in the Far West, and are the dusky grouse, with the varieties known as the sooty grouse and Richardson's grouse. The members of the second family have but sixteen tail-feathers, and the males have no apparent air-sac on the side of the neck. To it belongs the Canada grouse, or spruce partridge, of the Northeast, and Franklin's grouse of Northern Montana, Idaho, and the Cascade Ranges. Throughout the West these species are known, indiscriminately, as spruce grouse, pine grouse, black grouse, mountain grouse, gray grouse, hill-cock, and fool-hen, the last term being the one most commonly in use. All varieties of the dusky grouse resemble the typical *Dendragapus obscurus* in appearance and habit. Above, they are a dusky gray or dull blackish (a blue-black in the sooty grouse), usually more or less mottled, especially on the wings; tail, black, generally with a broad terminal band of gray; lower parts, chiefly a plain slate-gray, more or less varied with white on the flanks. The female is distinguished by faint buffy or brownish

shades upon the upper parts, and the downy young differ from all other grouse in their pale, chestnut-brown color, mottled with black, forming six irregular stripes down the rump. As the spruce grouse commonly rears two broods in a season, the young of the first brood will be found to have attained almost their full growth by the middle of August. Where shall we look for them? They wander more from day to day than do the sharp-tails. In the morning and at evening, the young birds may be found near some mountain brook. They are now free from parental care, and, during August and September, afford first-rate sport, and act like game birds. They lie well to the dogs, but will not allow the shooter to walk over them before they can be flushed. Flying swiftly, but not far, they afford good wing-shots. They are, moreover, in best condition for the table. Again, the brood will not allow itself to be scattered for any length of time. Their days are spent away up among the pines. An hour or two before sunset, they come down to the stream to drink, and remain in the underbrush all night, returning to the mountains soon after sunrise. They travel on the wing, and sportsmen who lie in wait for them at the opens which they are obliged to cross are usually rewarded with good bags.

For hunting them we shall load with 1⅛ ounces of No. 8 shot; and high hunting-boots will be a convenience, as we may have streams to wade. We shall certainly have to clamber over rocks, and make our way through thickets, before we find them at their midday meal; but in this exhilarating atmosphere such tramps are not hard work, and as we climb higher and higher, and, now and again, turn to get views of the green hills, with snow-clad crests, of timber-lined cañons opening upon the desert of a pearly haze—a boundless sea, upon whose breast the distant purple peaks seem inverted like islands

in mid-ocean, and where every mirage pictures a tropical oasis—we forget our quest, and are lost in admiration of the scene. The sportsman who will not draw vigor and inspiration from such a view has no business in this country. He may be a piece of walking mechanism, but he lacks a soul. Up we go! The smoke of the camp-fire fades in the distance. Clouds float about us, and at length, as conquerors, we tread the carpet of fragrant pine-needles. Not here, where trees are far apart, but in some dense thicket, where the stunted conifers try in vain to lift their heads among their stately elders, will we find the objects of our search. Perchance our pointers will be of little service. No—already they catch a scent, but do not seem to be able to locate it. Probably it is from some old bird that is perched in a tree. There is a low clump where we may be successful. The dogs come up against the wind, and stand. How the chickens look at us, and ruffle up their neck-feathers as though longing for a fight! Get ready, for there is no telling how soon they will fly. Up they rise, circling as they go, and then dart noiselessly for a tree, where they will remain long enough for us to get a sitting shot. Notice how closely they resemble the brown excrescences on the weather-beaten trunk, and then pick out the lowest bird, and shoot up, so as not to frighten them. That was soon done. The bag is heavier now. Let us retrace our steps for an instant to find the bird whose scent the dogs lost. It is probably some moulting male, that seeks retirement at this season. The moulting season lasts from July until September, and Franklin's grouse moults earlier than does its dusky brother.

We soon tire of walking up and down hill upon the slippery needles, so we shall go down to a coppice-guarded spring and discuss our lunch; but if you are a stranger in the mountains, and are interested in natural history, I

would advise you to keep ears attent and eyes open. Down in the tall grass, what is the clucking that we hear? Steal softly up, and see the hen with her second brood. Ah! she spies us, but does not appear alarmed on that account. The little ones crouch down, and eye us suspiciously, while the old lady continues her clucking and scratching as composedly as though we were miles away. Approaching nearer, she ruffles her feathers, and acts like a barn-yard fowl under similar circumstances. Can they be domesticated? Yes; the dusky grouse breeds in confinement, and could the hen be constantly surrounded by her brood, she would never think of flying away. The young birds are frequently captured and tamed by the cow-boys, but when the cattle move down from the mountains in the autumn, the young birds are generally fried, or are turned loose to return to their old haunts. Here, in a grassy tussock, is a nest containing seven eggs, creamy, and sprinkled with a chocolate brown. At least fifteen eggs would have been found had we located the nest in the early spring.

Early in April is heard the ventriloquistic love-call of the amorous male. It is made by the gular air-sacs, and is of a softer tone than the boom of the pinnated grouse. It is preceded by a prolonged whir. At this time the cock presents a striking appearance. His air-sacs are a bright orange, plumage metallic in lustre, and he spreads a gorgeous, fan-like tail upon some lofty bough, preferring a pedestal to the vulgar ground. To these charms, rather than to ball-room accomplishments, does he trust, and, while not quarrelsome, he will, in wooing season, fight longer and harder than will the sharp-tail. After the broods break up, they never form a winter pack, as do the sharp-tails. Their habits of feeding keep them solitary, and in the depth of winter they are much more wary than at any other time. They will remain for days

on a pine-tree, getting both food and moisture from the lance-like leaves. When disturbed, they do not rise, but drop almost to the ground, and then glide away in silence, their flight at this time being wonderfully swift. They do not deserve the name "fool-hen," which comes from the refusal of the female to desert her chicks and from the unwillingness of the moulting male to vacate his perch.

The sooty grouse, locally known as the blue grouse, is found throughout the mountain region north and west of the falls of the Yellowstone River. It is the common grouse of the coast ranges between the Columbia River and Alaska. This bird does not love to travel. If he leaves an open valley on the approach of winter, he does not, as many imagine, desert the country; he simply seeks the top of some tall fir or pine tree, where, for months, his diet consists entirely of buds, tender twigs, and needles. Although the sooty grouse lives at a high altitude and in a cold country, it is partial to sunlight and warmth, and, in almost every case, will be found on the hill-side having a southern exposure, and sheltered from piercing blasts of the north wind. Neither does it prefer the seclusion of a forest and the gloom of heavy timber. It requires a clearing, or else scattered pine or tamarack trees at the edge of the dense timber. This bird does not "pack" in winter, and I doubt if, as a rule, families remain together during cold weather. A pair will be found, or a female with a late brood, but the sooty grouse is by no means inclined to be social. They succeed in concealing themselves more effectively than do most of their congeners. Instinct teaches them to perch amid the most dense foliage, and if they are discovered seated upon a naked branch, they crouch lengthwise upon it, and so succeed in concealing themselves from aught but the closest observation. I have never found

the nest of the sooty grouse among quaking aspen timber or among the willows and tall grasses near an upland brook. The favorite spot is beneath the wide-spreading roots of a hill-side pine, and I have found one nest remote from heavy timber, beneath a mountain mahogany. While the sharp-tail prefers grassy slopes, the blue grouse haunts the rocks. The males, especially, look for rocky points during the season of incubation, and one and another will perch upon a commanding pinnacle, and while ostensibly acting as a sentinel, will court the admiration of all observers. As a rule, nine to twelve eggs are found in a set, and the period of incubation is eighteen days. The young chicks remain with their hen for a week or two, in close proximity to the place where they were hatched, and when they get sufficiently strong to make a short flight, their mother takes them down to the willow-fringed stream. Their food, at this time, is much like that of the sharp-tailed grouse, though they are rather more partial to insects, and will wander away from the thickets to some grass-grown park in search of grasshoppers. Later in the season, their food consists of berries, and they are especially fond of the seeds of the helianthus. While with the young, the note of the hen is very much like the cackling of a common barn-yard fowl.

August comes, and now the *tyhee cullaw-cullaw* (the chief-bird of the Indians) is in prime condition, and equally interesting to gourmand and sportsman. Two months later the flesh will begin to assume a resinous flavor, and by the 1st of January par-boiling with onions will fail to take away the taste of spruce gum. Rare sport it is, in the bracing morning atmosphere of early autumn, to shoulder a twelve-gauge gun, and with a good dog beat up the thickets about a mountain brook, or skirt the heavier pine timber of the uplands. Hunt the coolest places, is

the rule, and in the heat of the day you will have the best luck almost at the water's edge. In fact, if you are after trout, you will often want to temporarily exchange the split bamboo for a gun, and if you are after grouse, you will long for your rod, that you may try some specially inviting pool or riffle, upon which you come most unexpectedly. The birds never outgrow their disposition to hide, and the smallest tussock or clump of leaves serves their purpose. They lie well to the dog, and without a dog you will almost step upon them before becoming aware of their proximity; but when they rise, there is nothing to equal their swift, strong, straight-away flight. If a brood is carefully marked down, they may all be brought to bag, as nothing but a rock wall will make them vary their line of direction. In spring, and until the young are able to fly, the Indians of the Northwest have a superstitious horror of killing or eating a sooty grouse. Why the bird should, at this particular season, be especially sacred to the Great Spirit, I can not tell, but it is certain that the Indian believes that ill-luck and disaster will follow the slayer of a newly mated or breeding "chief-bird;" but once the game season opens, their conscientious scruples vanish in an instant, and any means of extermination, fair or foul, are legitimate with them. Some of the coast Indians dry the birds in the sun, or smoke them for a season, and, while the flesh is never thoroughly cured, as is venison, an Indian's stomach can stand a meal from this half-prepared pemican long after it is too "high" for a civilized tourist. The sportsman in going for grouse can not find all kinds in any one location. If he takes the Union Pacific route, he will find himself in the region of the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. If he travel over the northern route, very few sharp-tails, but plenty of sooty and dusky grouse, will find their way to his bag as he moves westward from the main chain of

the Rocky Mountains, and, nearing the coast, Franklin's grouse will become abundant. The Canadian line would give him plenty of sport with ptarmigans. Franklin's grouse lives at a lower altitude than does the dusky grouse, and prefers a sandy, pine-barren region. To this species the term "fool hen" may be properly applied, for it will almost put its head in a noose, and, when disturbed, it does not trust to its wings, but sneaks through the underbrush or runs to cover as fast as its legs can carry it. The males are occasionally gregarious, but a polygamous family is the exception and not the rule.

The specific difference between this bird and other Western members of the genus *Dendragapus* is found in the tail, which has but sixteen feathers, and in the absence of the air-sac on the side of the neck. Both sexes are barred above with black and grayish, but beneath, there is a great difference. In the male, black predominates, barred with white, while the ground-color in the female is a rusty white or buff, barred with black. In the male, the tail is black to the extreme tip; in the female, the tail-feathers are tipped with a narrow band of white. The eggs are buff, spotted with dark-brown, and are considerably smaller than those of the sooty grouse.

Franklin's grouse is more easily domesticated than are any other birds of the family. Often cow-boys and sheepmen, who summer in the grass-covered upland valleys, bring in a nest of young chicks to the camp. The little strangers soon get over their natural timidity. They do not attempt to hide, nor yet to escape, so there is no use in clipping their wings, and they readily learn to recognize and seek the hand that feeds them.

I once attempted to form a "happy family." I built a little stockade of willows just outside my cabin, and, as a nucleus for an aviary, put therein a pair of burrowing owls about two weeks old. My next acquisition was a

pair of young grouse. As the owls slept all day and the chickens slept all night, peace reigned supreme. At evening, when I returned to camp, after the day's ride over the range, and fed my pets, they would all eat from my fingers, and the only sign of a quarrel would be when three of the birds would unite to rob the lucky fourth of some especially tempting morsel; but, in a most unfortunate hour, I discovered a pair of Western red-tailed hawks up the cañon. They were circling above a nest in an old pine-tree, and I instantly made up my mind that another ornithological prize was mine. I threw the bridle over the horse's head, and commenced to climb, and a hard forty-foot pull it was, but I met with no serious trouble until almost within reach of the nest. "Then the trouble began to brew." It did not brew long. It naturally burst, and those old hawks fanned my back with their powerful wings, and flew into my face with such fury that I was about ready to slide down as gracefully as possible. My wrists still bear the scars received from the talons of the mother bird. But my blood was up. I could hear the young hissing in the nest just above my head, so I made a last effort, obtained a foothold, and being in position to fight, soon had the melancholy and irate parents flapping twenty feet above me. The young birds were as large as full-grown prairie fowl, and well able to fly if they had possessed sufficient sense to leave the nest. As it was, they fought most viciously, but my handkerchief bound one and a piece of string the other, and the success of the expedition was assured. The old hawks followed me back to the cabin, though they were content to remain at a respectful distance. I clipped the wings of the captives, and put them in durance vile. Chicks and owls gave them a wide berth, and I thought I discerned signs of an approaching storm, so I gave them a hearty meal, to which the hawks did full justice,

and then settled themselves for an after-dinner nap. I offered them food again at night, but the red-tails seemed still satisfied with the memories of their noonday repast. All ate heartily the next morning, and I rode away thinking the aviary the success of the season; but alas for the best laid plans of mice and men! I came home at night, and no grouse were to be found. Feathers and bones told the tale. My little owls in the corner were hissing in a terrified manner, and those treacherous hawks, with bloody beaks and breasts, were dozing as tranquilly as doves. It was a time for the display of justice, not of wrath, so I searched the cabin for the oldest, strongest pipe that ever afforded solace to a cow-boy, and upon my knife-blade I scraped a few grains of the black, moist nicotine; then I reached into the cage, and caught Master Hawk by both legs before he had time to scratch, and, as he opened his mouth to protest against such unwarrantable impudence, drew the blade across his tongue, pulled out my watch, and took notes. In fifteen seconds he acted as though he had taken a powerful emetic; then he commenced to tremble violently, and in fifty seconds was upon his back gasping. Then his eyes began to glaze and his legs to stiffen, and in two minutes from the time of taking the dose he was a dead bird. His companion traveled the same road. That night the lonely owls burrowed their way out, and so ended my experience as a professional collector of live-stock. The dusky grouse, sooty grouse, and Franklin's grouse can, I believe, be successfully introduced into the mountain regions of the East, north of the Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. The Green Mountains, the Adirondacks, and the peaks of Maine would prove most home-like resorts for Franklin's grouse, and its sooty brother, that does not like to wander, would soon become contented with the rocky slopes of the Blue Ridge. They can obtain almost the

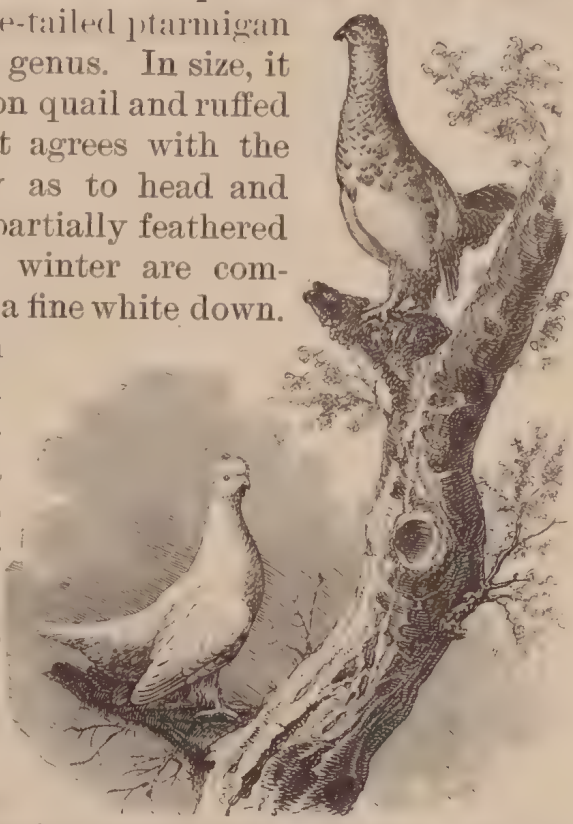
same food in the East that they have in the West, and the experiment of transplanting these game birds into regions where the ruffed grouse is almost extinct is worth trying.

As Eastern fishermen whip the salmon-pools of Quebec and Nova Scotia, so the opening of the great inter-mountain and coast range region by the Canadian Pacific Railway should give our American sportsmen the desire to wander more widely, and become better acquainted with the grouse and other game birds of the Northwest, which are as well worthy their attention as are the woodcock, quail, snipe and partridge of the Atlantic seaboard.

PTARMIGANS.

The ptarmigan belongs to British America and to Alaska, although it is found in the United States among the higher Sierra, Rocky, and Cascade Ranges. As Doctor Grinnell says: "Their tracks in the snow and their feathers are more often seen than the birds themselves." But two species are to be found in this country. One, the black-tailed or willow ptarmigan (*Lagopus*), is a rare winter immigrant, coming down from the Far North to the heights of the Adirondacks and of Maine. In these regions it may be found in mid-winter in packs, but by March it has taken its departure for its Arctic home. The second species is found upon the Alpine summits of the Rocky Mountains, thence westward to the higher ranges of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. It is the white-tailed ptarmigan, white or mountain quail, and is known to science as *Lagopus leucurus*. The fact that their habitat, except when they are feeding, is above the timber-line, makes them, although neither wild nor wary, a rare bird for the sportsman to bag; but the trouble that one must necessarily take to secure them does not pay in a region where spruce and sharp-tailed grouse are abundant. It is a

very singular fact that, excepting in winter, no two sportsmen will give the same description of the white-tailed ptarmigan. This is because the bird, from March to September, is in a continual moult. In winter, the only distinction in plumage between the two species is to be found in the black tail and primaries of the willow ptarmigan. The white-tailed ptarmigan is the smallest of its genus. In size, it is between the common quail and ruffed grouse; in shape, it agrees with the partridge, especially as to head and tail. The toes are partially feathered in summer, and in winter are completely covered with a fine white down. Four times in each year does the bird change its appearance. In winter it is a pure white, and so thick is the covering of feathers that it appears to be quite a good-sized chicken, but when killed it is found to be a very small wild fowl. In July, although it may be in first-rate condition, it may appear quite poor. The upper parts of the male are a yellowish gray, coarsely blurred with black, and the breast is a dirty white, cross-barred with black. The whole appearance is as though the ptarmigan needed a bath to show off his true colors; but this is not the case, for he indulges in a snow-bath several times each day, taking to a dry, northerly snow-bank as naturally as does a domestic fowl to a dusty road. The female looks very

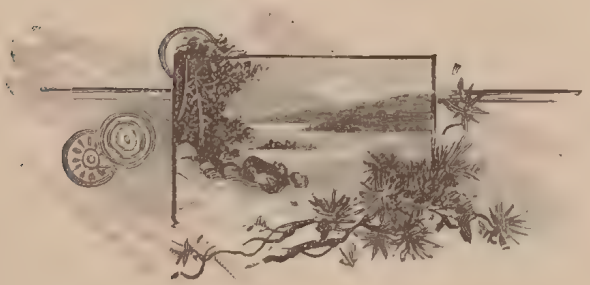


much like the male, but is smaller. The spring and autumn moults give the male a more uniform coat of reddish-gray, in which are irregular black patches, and the head and neck are more regularly barred. At this season the female is somewhat more tawny than is the male, and she always moults before he does. These changing colors most wonderfully adapt themselves to the storm beaten rocks among which the birds are found in summer; to the snows where they make their winter home. The nest is made of mosses or lichens, and is generally sheltered by some overhanging rock. In it are deposited ten or twelve eggs buff, sprinkled with a lustrous black. While upon the nest the female will not leave the eggs for any enemy, nor will the male hesitate to do battle in behalf of his mate, and this devotion and bravery are exhibited until the young brood leaves its parents.

In the latter part of the summer, the best time for hunting them, the white-tailed ptarmigans will be found in small coveys at the upper timber-line, where there are a few stunted pines and heather, within easy distance of snow on one side, and of twigs and berries on the other. They are very tame, and, if alarmed, will fly but a few yards, hence a very light charge of powder and shot will suffice for their destruction; but I doubt if dogs are an assistance in hunting them. Generally they cluck so loudly that there is no trouble in finding their location. If we fire into the flock for the purpose of alarming them, they will run to cover rather than take to flight. If the snow is of any depth, they will burrow in it, and so, almost instantly, sink out of sight. Their burrows are quite deep, and in this respect they differ from the tunnels of the sharp-tailed grouse. As, in autumn, the snow-line descends the mountain, the ptarmigan goes with it. The lower he goes the more wild does he become,

so that in winter it is almost impossible to get a shot at him. The flesh, too, has a piny flavor, and is very bitter. Owing to the shyness of the bird, and to its method of flight, the hunter at this season should load as though his campaign were to be for ducks, and should never use shot finer than No. 6.

With the mountain goat, the ptarmigan is one of the trophies of those sportsmen who isolate themselves from even camp fire comforts, and who are willing alone to climb the lofty peaks and cross the barren ridges that form the mighty continental divide; and he who has filled his bag with ptarmigans has, in this country, at least, nothing in the bird line left to satisfy his ambitious ardor.



PLOVER-SHOOTING.

By E. Hough,
Of "Forest and Stream."

LOVER-SHOOTING, as a sport, yearly assumes a greater importance and attracts a more general attention. Writers of the first and second quarters of the century have recorded that this bird, then plentiful to the last degree all through the mid-continent, was not pursued by the sportsman, on account of its insignificance, and was in danger only from market-shooters, who killed it for sale. To-day, the scarcity of the grouse, the quail, and other formerly abundant birds is causing shooters who love the breezy uplands to cast about them for new or practicable sport; and since the plover may be said to fit a vacant season in the shooting-year, there is a considerable and an additional interest taken in it as a game bird. As a pastime, plover-shooting can not be called wild, laborious, difficult, or dangerous, and it is therefore lacking in much that appeals to the hardy hunter's nature; yet it has some peculiar and not uninteresting features of its own—a certain individual fascination, quite capable of winning its own blind followers and devotees, and that all-abiding and all-worthy charm of any sport or occupation which calls us away from the desky and dusty city, out into the wide fields and under the clear sky.

I did never like a lawyer's brief, with long "Whereas" and "Therefore," nor did I ever fancy a book full of

learned disquisition. The unnamed flowers are the sweetest, the unclassified bird has the sweetest note of the air, and the unclassifying writer or reader the freest sweep of the wing, be that of fact or fancy. The sportsman, however, is naturally half naturalist. This is what Audubon says for us about our bird:

"Family *Charadriina*—plovers. Bill, short, straight, subcylindrical, and obtusely pointed; upper mandible, with dorsal line straight for one-half its length, afterward, convex; nasal groove, bare, extended along two-thirds the length of the bill. Head, moderate size, rather compressed, rounded in front. Eyes, large. Neck, rather short. Body, ovate, rather full. Plumage, soft, blended, somewhat compact above. Wings, long, pointed, with the first quill longest. Tail, of moderate length, somewhat rounded, or with middle feathers projecting; of twelve feathers. Nest, on ground, shallow; eggs, generally four, large, pyriform, spotted. Young, densely covered with down, and able to walk immediately after birth."

In the above description, it is probable that the average sportsman will remember, out of his own experience, only the rounded head, the large eye, the short neck, and the "ovate, rather full" body, noticeable as salient form-features in the species of plover familiar to himself. When it comes to the matter of coloration, there is wide divergence in the plover types, and in many cases the scientific description will not call to mind any bird familiar to the inland or Western shooter. Audubon gives seven species of the genus *Charadrius*, which may be briefly mentioned as the black-bellied plover, the golden plover, the Rocky Mountain plover, the killdeer plover, the Wilson's plover, the American ring plover, and the piping plover. With the exception of the golden plover, none of these birds is of such habits, or such

habitat, as to deserve our attention herein. We will bear the golden plover in mind.

When we have gone through all the species which the scientists permit us to call plovers, we shall not yet have found the bird which, of all plovers, or so-called plovers, is perhaps the most generally known—the "upland plover." I doubt not that many a shooter who has looked down upon the brown, striated back of this beautiful bird, as it lay before him on the grass, has thought how like it looked to the jacksnipe; it will perhaps surprise him to know, however, that, according to the scientists, the upland plover is not a plover at all, but a snipe! This, although everybody knows that our bird keeps as far away from water as it possibly can! We must, however, meekly submit to our friends the scientists, and read as below:

Family *Scolopacinæ*—snipes. Genus 1, *Tringa;* species *Bartramia.* "Bartramian sandpiper" (Audubon). "Bartram's tatler" (Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway). *Bartramia longicanda* (Less.).

We have now located our second plover, and may call it, if we wish to be prim about it, the Bartramian sandpiper, or Bartram's tatler. After this, we may, if we wish, forget all about Mr. Bartram's connection with our bird, or our bird's connection with the snipe family, and pass on to the more practical consideration of our narrowed theme, which will have to do with the two birds which the upland shooter most often meets, and which will afford him the best sport at plover-shooting.

The Golden Plover (*Charadrius marmoratus*).—This, the more important of our two birds, is doubtless familiar to most upland shooters of the West and South, and certainly, if one has ever seen it, he will not readily forget the fact, for it is a singularly beautiful and stylish bird. The clean-cut lines of the head and neck, the deep

black of the breast, and the golden mottle of the back are the main remembrances one brings away from the side of a flock of golden plovers as they stalk, tall and erect, or run swiftly across a field. Seen at a distance, the birds look nearly as large as pigeons, and their appearance is alert, wary, and truly game-like. On the ground, swift, bright and self-possessed; on the wing, rapid, erratic—now sweeping close along the ground in long and loose array, and now glancing with a hundred golden gleams as they turn in serried rank against the shafts of the morning sun—they are fit subjects for the artist's pencil, and worthy incentives for the sportsman's enthusiasm. They are birds of the fair, warm fields, of the blue sky, of the gentle breath of spring or early fall. They come first when the frost has left the air, when the grass is growing green, and when the leaves on the hedges are bigger than a squirrel's ear. They come again in the fall, when summer has just finished the rounding out of her golden work, and before the chill winds have laid their blight upon the land. Golden with the promise of the spring, and golden with the fruition of the summer, I know not why we should not love and cherish them, and hold them very worthy of good place and proper sportsman's handling.

The golden plover is preëminently a migratory bird, and wide, indeed, is the range it covers with the sweep of its bold and sinewy wing. Its loose and scattered bands are often seen far out at sea, and it still seems perfectly at home and perfectly confident. It goes to the Bahamas and to Bermuda, is found in the West Indies, in Central and South America, and even in Paraguay and Chili. It is seen at Sitka and the Northwest Coast, and indeed over most of the British Possessions. It breeds far to the north, on the Arctic Coast, or on the islands of the Arctic Sea. We who hear its "whit! whit-whit!"

in May, do not stop to reflect on the long journey ahead of our cheerful traveler; yet by June the young birds are hatched, and by August or September we may see the armies going south, seeking, it may be, the pampas of South America, or some unknown Andean plains untouched by foot of man. The migration to the North is just at the heels of winter, and the birds reach us in Indiana and Illinois just after the duck season has closed, and when the jacksnipe are first beginning to grow scarcer. Their time depends much upon the season, but the 1st of May can be roughly called their date. Usually they appear in good numbers along in April. They pass on north gradually, and as warm weather comes on, they disappear, after affording the shooter perhaps three, four, or even six weeks of sport. Before the birds have left the latitude of the States named, they have paired, and the females are often heavy with eggs. It is unquestionably wrong to shoot them then, but as we have not any laws adequately protecting them, that must be a question for each shooter's own conscience. May all our consciences grow tender.

In the fall flight, the birds do not look as they did when going north. They have lost their brave black breast-plate, and have taken on a paler and more mottled color. This is noticeable not only in the young birds, but also in the old ones. The brilliant black of the breast is peculiar to the breeding-season, and the bird is far more beautiful in spring-time, when it has on the livery of love. We should respect this livery, and let the little creatures love on and rear their families in peace. That is all there is to life, and there is in all Nature a sympathetic voice of protest against intrusion or destruction then.

There are three ways of shooting the golden plover, the latter of which alone is to be held effective and

sportsmanlike—by flight-shooting, by stalking with a team, and by shooting over decoys. Flight shooting in the North rarely affords any sport, unless by mere accident. On rare occasions, the gunner may find a fly-way along some low swale or strip of green country, lying in the path of the moving bands of birds, but this is so infrequent an occurrence that it barely deserves mention.

The commonest way of shooting the golden plover, in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Dakota, is by means of a team. The birds can rarely be approached closely enough on foot, but they do not so readily take fright at a vehicle or at horses or cattle. When, therefore, a flock has been discovered feeding upon some green field, strip of meadow, or wide stretch of prairie, the shooter, or shooters—for several may indulge in this sport together—drive quietly and slowly in that direction, not advancing too directly upon the flock, but aiming to skirt the edge. The birds will lower their heads and dart along the ground, pause, lean and listen, and perhaps half-spread their wings, but unless much hunted they will usually allow a wagon to be driven within fifty or sixty yards of them; then away they go, skimming the ground swiftly for a little way, then rising and heading off for another feeding-ground, whither that hunter who is best acquainted with the country will next lead the party. As the birds begin to stretch their wings over their heads, and to show the uneasiness which precedes the flight, the shooters at once descend upon the side of the vehicle opposite the flock, and walk in as closely as possible, perhaps taking a smart run of a few steps just before firing. No true sportsman, of course, will think of firing at these birds upon the ground. The discharge is apt to be quite fatal enough, as the birds cross and huddle in the act of rising, and the No. 8's or 7's will make sad havoc in the gleaming golden ranks. It is not

unusual for one gun to kill from 100 to 150 golden plover a day, in this style of shooting, on the prairies and fields of Northern Illinois. It is not a sort of sport demanding any especial skill, and is too apt to be followed by a rabble of pot-hunters, boys, greenhorns, and all the unspeakable mob who hang on the skirts of decent gunnery. Followed rightly, it is fairly successful early in the season, though never so much so on the golden plover as on the upland plover. At its best form, and in the hands of gentlemen, it is capable of being a bright, breezy, cheerful, and not unwholesome sort of shooting. It may be varied by stalking on horseback, or by the use of a led horse. Sometimes a good caller will bring a flock around for a second shot at this style of shooting. This is most apt to happen when a cripple or two are left standing or running. Like the curlew, the golden plover is loath to leave a comrade in distress, and decoys readily to the note of such a comrade.

The only artistic and truly sportsmanlike form of sport at the golden plover, however, is in shooting over decoys, to which the birds are called in by an imitation of their whistle. This form of sport is not well understood, and is not practiced by very many sportsmen, although doubtless it will soon become more general. It is by all means the most successful and the most interesting way to hunt the golden plover. It is the method followed by the most skillful market-hunters.

In this form of sport, the general principles of decoy-shooting obtain, and the old duck-shooter will be the first to take up the idea well. The main difficulty, of course, is to learn the country where the birds are feeding, and to map out the fly-ways between the feeding-grounds. When such a fly-way has once been established, the shooter who finds it will not be forced to change his blind so often as the duck-shooter, and he will have to deal

with a bird far less wary than the cunning wild fowl. When, therefore, he has gained a knowledge of the local trading of the birds, and found their crossing-points, he may comfortably seat himself, and not bother about a possible change of the flight. He may, perhaps, shoot a week out of one blind, and kill as many birds the last day as the first. If he spends his time chasing around over the prairies, he probably will not get half so many in the total bag.

It should be borne in mind that the decoys must not go down upon the feeding-ground, but upon a passage-way between two feeding-grounds. Such a passage-way can be determined only by a study of the flight. The golden plover feeds on small insects, grasshoppers, surface worms, tender vegetation, and the seeds of grasses and certain herbs. A field of sprouting oats, a green meadow, or a last year's plowing is apt to be frequented by them. If disturbed on such a ground, they fly to the nearest similar ground they have discovered, which may be half a mile or two miles away. A good bit of meadow lying between the two feeding-grounds, in a place prominent enough to be readily seen from a distance, will be a likely place to put out the decoys. The birds will not observe any very definite line in going and coming, for they are not so methodical as wild geese, but they will pass near enough to be reached by the shooter's call-note. It may be necessary to move once or twice until the right spot has been obtained, where the birds most often pass over when pursued from their feed. After that, you will let someone else do the pursuing, while you do the watching and the shooting. The golden plover is unlike the wild duck in the matter of decoying. It is an old saying among duck-shooters that "you can't drive ducks to decoys." To some extent, you can drive golden plover so, for they are a very gullible bird, affectionate, constant,

and sociable to a degree. They decoy not only once, but often two or three times, to the false flock and the deceitful whistle, until sometimes the greater part of their numbers shall lie dead upon the grass. It is therefore the main desire of the blind-shooter that something shall keep the birds stirred up. They have no regular movements when left undisturbed, although in some erratic moment a whole flock may take a notion to rise and pass over to some other distant spot.

The blind of the plover-shooter need be no very elaborate affair. A fringed pit is good, but if the shooter can find some ditch or hollow into which he can crawl, he will find a thin barrier of grass or weeds sufficient, provided he keeps still. The duck-shooter will understand this perfectly. It is the motionless shooter in the thin blind who gets the birds. A heavy blind is not desirable.

Plover decoys are sold on the market. One can secure as large a flock as he desires, but if he has half a dozen decoys he need not feel afraid, if he knows how to call the birds. It is the call that does the business. A passing flock of plover, over half a mile away, will swing about on hearing a call, and will then fairly hunt for the decoys until they find them. The best possible decoys are the wing-tipped live birds, which the shooter, if he be heartless as the market-shooters are, will always preserve and tie out among his flock. These, by their motions and their cries, will bring the wild flock in again and again. Much better than the wooden or tin decoys are the dead birds, set up on sticks, much as the duck-shooter sets out his dead ducks for decoys. You will see the market-hunter put out his dead birds so, until he may have fifty or a hundred scattered about him.

Let no one gather the idea that plover-shooting over decoys is a simple thing, which any fellow can do. It is

the easiest thing in the world to make a mistake in setting out the decoys which shall cost you half your birds. You do not want the wind to blow across your blind to the decoys, or across the decoys toward your blind. The decoys must be at *one side* of the blind. Suppose the wind is blowing from the east to the west, you put out your decoys to the north of your blind, and not to the east or west.

The decoys should be set out in a longish line, rather wedge-shaped, point down the wind, and all at easy gun-range—not too close. Hearing the call, the birds swing, cross over, and come up-wind to alight among the decoys, drawing to the encouraging low "whit, whit" of the gunner. By no means shoot when the birds are crossing, or skimming the ground on any side but the decoy side. They will swing and draw in obliquely toward the blind, and the fire should be reserved till then, if the most murderous effect is what is desired. Even when the point of the flock is well within range, do not fire at the leading birds; aim at the middle—oblique of the flock; the charge will then rake the flock. As the remnant double up and rise, the second barrel, held till the right time, goes far toward completing the work. The flock passes on, depleted. The low, deceitful, bewildering whistle still assails their ears, and they see still the likeness of their friends standing unmoved amid the confusion. Again they swing, their own notes now half-frightened and half-plaintive. If you have the heart for further slaughter, your chance has come again. Twenty, thirty, or forty birds may fall to your gun from one flock. If you got only six or eight, your friend, and possible companion, the market-hunter, would laugh at you. Two hundred in a day, 1,000 in a week—you can do this in Northern Illinois, even to-day, if you have the natural heart for butchery.

But in order to be thus successful, you must be an expert plover-shooter, and to be an expert, you must be able to call the birds. You may buy a plover-call, and from it produce a fairly accurate note; but the trouble about this is that you can not hear it at any great distance, which latter is just what you want. The best market-shooters do not use any call, but put their fingers in their mouths and give a shrill whistle. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that a flock of plover can thus be called nearly a mile down-wind. The note is a keen "*whit!* wheet-wheet! *whit!*" repeated at about equal intervals. It can only be gained by constant practice in the field, and the proficiency with which one can execute the call is about the measure of his success at golden plover shooting.

There lives in Chicago an Italian about forty years of age, who keeps a little fruit-store on Wabash Avenue, and is known in the game market and among Chicago shooters as "Italian Joe," or sometimes as "Plover Joe." He hunts for the market, and except a little shooting at woodcock, he never hunts anything but plover. He shoots over decoys, and is possessed of a rare judgment, which makes him invariably successful. He is the best plover-hunter of Chicago, and I presume there is not one in the United States who could surpass him. His whistle is the most perfect imitation of the golden plover's call-note I ever heard. Back in the rear of his little shop, on a warm summer day, he repeated the plover-call again and again as we sat talking, and the loud, clear note rang out through the open door, and pierced the jumbled din of the noisy street, till people turned and listened. Then Joe's eyes grew far-away in their look, and, as the rumble of the city claimed its own, I presume Joe dreamed of unsmoked skies and fields well paved with green.

My Italian friend gave me one hint that shooters may well notice. He claimed that in the fall, when the birds are so very fat, No. 7 is a better shot to use than No. 8, as the latter shot is hardly heavy enough to pierce the heavy layer of fat which fairly swaddles the birds at that season of the year. In the spring, No. 8 is the correct shot, unless one is trying to walk upon the birds, or to shoot them from a vehicle after they have grown wild.

For the upland plover, my market-shooter expressed an unqualified contempt, partly because it brings so little in the market, and partly because it can not be worked with decoys. Neither did he care for the "May plover," "prairie plover," "gray plover," or "sand-snipe," whose dense flocks sometimes wheel in over the decoys and leave heavy tribute behind them. We also can afford to leave this latter little bird out of our consideration as a game bird, and now pass on to our second plover, not so good a game bird as the golden plover, but perhaps even more widely known.

THE UPLAND PLOVER (*Bartramia longicauda*, Less.).—This bird is called "grass plover" in Texas and most of the South, and in the Southwest. It is called "papabotte" in New Orleans, where it is much prized as a delicacy. It has different local names in the North, sometimes being known as the "yellow-leg," which is wrong, as confusing it with the yellow-shanked tatler, and besides as being not descriptive. It is sometimes loosely called "prairie runner," "spring plover," or "tilt-up." The name of "upland plover," however, is one very widely known for it, and will instantly bring the bird to mind for every upland shooter in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota, and the entire West and mid-continent generally.

If the golden plover is a bold traveler, the upland plover is yet more so. Few birds are more widely

scattered. It is found pretty much all over the United States, as far north as the plains of the Saskatchewan, and as far south as Mexico, Central America, and the pampas of South America. A few specimens of it have been killed in England; one specimen was killed near Sydney, Australia; one was taken on the Island of Malta, in the Mediterranean Sea, and it sometimes visits the Island of Trinidad. It has been known to breed so far north as Fort Yukon, also in the mountains of Lower Mackenzie, and in the Gens de Large Mountains, 200 miles northeast of the Yukon. It is occasionally found in the sparser districts of New England, and once bred plentifully on Long Island and throughout Pennsylvania. It fairly swarms at times on the lower table-lands of Utah and Colorado, and overruns Kansas and Nebraska in large flocks. It breeds very largely in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin to-day, and the bulk of the flight does not go any farther north than that. It leaves Southwestern Texas from the 1st to the 10th of May, and re-appears there in July, passing thence on south by September or October. It appears in the North with the first warm weather of settled spring, about the time the young grass is knee-high to it on the burned-over prairies or high swales. It passes farther north than Kansas, but in the latitude of Northern Illinois it lingers all through the summer, and breeds on the high prairies. At the date of this writing (July, 1889), I could go out any day, within twenty miles of Chicago, and kill three or four dozen of the upland plover, did I care to do so at such a season of the year. I should be inclined, from my own experience, to name Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Indian Territory as the best shooting-grounds for this bird. It is usually noticed more abundantly in the spring than in the fall in Kansas and Nebraska, although it is not then nearly so fat and tender as in the fall. There is

no bird that flies which takes on so remarkable an amount of fat as the upland plover. I have often known them to split open across the breast upon falling from no very great height. They fatten very readily when feeding upon wheat-stubble, and are then delicious eating.

I presume we shall be obliged to call this bird a snipe, although in habit and appearance it is so unlike one. We may find some kinship to the snipe in the bill of the upland plover, which is longer than the head, and slightly curved. The legs are yellow-gray in color, the feet being darker. The head is dark brown, striped with a pale yellow median line, as in the jacksnipe. The sides of the head and neck are streaked with a dusky color, and the eye is surrounded with a yellow-white strip It is a graceful and beautiful bird.

The upland plover migrates by night, and also by day. It usually flies high, except in rough weather, and moves in straggling bands. In Iowa City, Iowa, in 1878, I once heard a passage of plover at night which lasted for over an hour. The air seemed full of their soft, plaintive cries of "plitt! plitt! pu-litt!" I think there were also some golden plover in that flight.

The upland plover does not customarily feed in so large flocks as the golden plover, and even when one finds them in considerable abundance, they are apt to appear in long, strung-out bands or scattered little bunches. They do not decoy regularly enough to warrant the use of decoys, and the shooter need not waste time in putting out a flock. I have, in a few instances, shot them over decoys made of dead birds, but could hardly say that they drew in to the flock; nor is it certain that they will pay more than the slightest attention to a good imitation of their whistle, although they may take a notion to draw in to a call-note once in awhile, when about to alight upon a feeding-ground. They are

nervous, keen, erratic little birds, sometimes so tame that they can be approached at a short distance, and again so wild that the gunner can hardly get within range, except by the most careful maneuvering. It is hardly worth while to undertake hunting them on foot. Riding upon them in a vehicle is the best way to handle them. That is the way they are usually hunted in the West and Southwest, and it is a very successful method. This is a popular form of sport in Nebraska and Kansas, and great bags are often made, fifty birds to a gun being no extraordinary score. I am sure I can not see why a couple of dozen would not do as well. In speaking further of the sport of upland plover shooting, I shall quote partly from an article on that sport which I had occasion to write, in 1889, in the course of a series of articles upon field sports, published in the *Globe-Democrat* newspaper, of St. Louis. Speaking in the early spring, this recountal said:

"This bird, in its physical configuration, might appear to be a cross between a jacksnipe and a sparrow-hawk, but it isn't, although it is marked somewhat like the former bird, and in its flight might, at a little distance, be mistaken for the latter, which it resembles in bigness of body and spread of wing. The upland plover, however, although it often hovers aloft, or skates down with strongly curved wing to some selected lighting-spot, does not sail in long parallels, as does the little hawk, but continuously works its passage with repeated flappings of the wings, and in its hasty flights its wings describe so large an arc that they seem to touch like wide fans, first above and then below the body of the bird.

"This peculiarity will betray it at once to the hunter who has become familiar with it, even did he not become advised of its presence by that long, liquid, silvery, and sweetly musical note which drops down like a spoonful

of melted vocal pearls out of some unidentified corner of the sky. This 'whistle' of the upland plover - though it is not more a whistle than the softest breathings of the flute - is the purest and sweetest, the most inimitable and unapproachable sound in Nature. As the note of the mourning-dove is the very soul of melancholy grief, the likeness of the plaint of widowed woe, so may this translucent, innocent sound, so light that you can see through it, almost, and sweet as the dew that hangs on any honeyvine, be likened to the careless and unsyllabled laugh of a virgin soul, too young to think of widows or of brides. It is so very sweet that Nature, always fit and proper in her ways, surrounds it with mystery, so that on a bright, warm day of spring, when one hears this gentle, sparkling sound bubble out of the blue sky, apparently just above his head, he may look up and see no bird, and may further look about him on all hands, examining earth and sky alike, and yet find no trace of the origin of the winged music. At last there may be the flit of a gray wing across a half-section of plowed ground, and finally he may see this feathered ghost alight yet farther away, tossing both wings apeak high over its head, and uttering a shrill, joyful 'wy-ee-ee,' which may be heard a mile.

"When the migrating birds alight, as they do pretty much all through the wilder prairie sections of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and kindred States, they usually overrun the country very rapidly, so that a locality untenanted by them one day may on the day following be fairly swarming with them. They do not affect low, marshy grounds, as their cousins in the long-legged family, the snipe, but keep up on the high prairies, being especially fond of ground that has been recently burned over. If there are any plovers in the country, they are pretty sure to make their appearance on or near such a strip of ground. They are also partial to good, soft, warm,

plowed ground, especially such as lies on high, rolling hills or table-lands. Sometimes, too, they patronize dry corn-fields, or closely cropped meadows. They will fly around over a last year's stubble-field, which is being turned under by the plow, and alight close behind the plowman in the fresh furrow; but in that case they are as likely to hop over on the dry ground as on the fresh. They feed mostly on seeds, fresh young grasses or herbs, and small insects. These birds were once more plentiful in Iowa and Missouri than they are now. They have kept near the front edge of civilization, although they are not strangers even in such States as Illinois and Indiana. In the Indian Territory, they are very abundant, although I never heard of anyone caring enough for them to go so far as that for them. They are very plentiful pretty much all over Kansas and Nebraska, in season, and probably sport at them may be had about as well in those States as anywhere.

"The hunter for upland plover does not need any dog. If he has a dog, he would better tie him up at home, and then shoot him, for fear he would get loose. Most of all, the hunter needs a horse, or team of horses, properly broken to 'stand fire,' and a light rig of some kind, which will admit of his getting in and out very quickly. The upland plover is, in some respects, no fool. It will rarely allow itself to be approached by the hunter on foot, and although a few birds may be bagged by the walking hunter, it is safe to say that his bag will be light beside that of the shooter who has a forty-year-old horse, blind in both eyes, deaf, and of a sweet and peaceful disposition. A very good rig for plover-shooting is a light two-wheeled road-cart, with no body, and only a seat and a pair of wheels. With this sort of an outfit, the hunter can travel over almost any kind of country, and can easily jump out and fire when he has worked in close

enough to his birds. The subsequent proceedings all depend on the horse. If that animal takes a notion to go home just then—and under such circumstances the staidest old family horses often develop unaccountable kittenishness—the hunter can do little but follow patiently after, and pick his chariot off the first wire fence. He will swear, but that won't help him. The etiquette of plover-shooting admits of swearing when one's horse runs away.

"When it has been determined that the plover are 'using on' a certain piece of ground, the shooter, or shooters—for several may practice this sport together very nicely if their wagon be big enough—repair to that neighborhood on almost any day, or at any time of the day. The weather does not make any insuperable difference. There is no necessity to get out betimes for an early morning hunt, nor is there any bundling up or waiting on some lonesome stand, knee-deep in mud and water. Plover-hunting is a leisurely, fair-weather sort of sport, a truly *dilettante* sport, and if the plover-hunter were not often a duck-hunter, in season, there would be justice in the suspicion that he had something of the sybarite in his disposition, rather than the rugged, hardy spirit of the genuine hunter.

"In the bright, warm days, however, when the blood takes on a mellow mildness in the veins, and no other game is in the land to stimulate the slumbering ambition, the best of shooters might be forgiven for taking a day at the plover, or perhaps two days, in the short season of a few weeks when plover-shooting is at its best. And let the older hunter take his days near the close of the season, when the persistent pounding of the greenhorns has rendered the birds more wild. There will then be an added difficulty to the sport, which will give it additional claim to consideration. Early in the season, before the birds have mastered the fact that man is a ravenous and

wantonly cruel animal, they are easily approachable, and may easily be knocked down by a moderately skillful shot. I have even heard of their being shot on the ground by some persons, although I do not believe that there is any foolish butcher so self-distrustful of his skill as to creep up on this open-minded little bird and shoot it with a shot-gun before it has taken wing. The man who would do that would steal. Investigation will show the truth of this assertion. Even an indifferent wing-shot may bag fifty, sixty, or even 100 plovers a day on a country thickly occupied by them, as often happens. Such shooting as this does not appeal to the thorough sportsman.

"It sometimes happens, however, that these long-legged little fellows acquire a certain shrewdness of their own, which makes their capture by no means a foregone conclusion. They will take a long spurt across the field or prairie, fairly making their slender legs twinkle as they sprint along ahead of the shooter; then they will straighten up, look around, and if they think the shooter is getting too close, will take wing, with a nonchalant 'Oh, quit! quit!' In such a flight, they skim along close to the ground. They go a pretty good pace, and the gunner who jumps one at forty yards rise is by no means certain of knocking it down.

"The proper gun for upland plover shooting would be a 16-gauge, if we shot that gun very much in this country, or if we could all afford to have as many guns as we liked. Barring that, the 12-gauge, that best of all guns for an all-around weapon, will do only too well. The size of shot is naturally No. 8, and the powder charge should not be over three drams. Of course, there will be some shooters who will hunt plovers with duck-guns and duck-loads, but such fellows want the earth, and are afraid some of it will get away. They are the kicking brethren.

They would kick if they were hung, as the saying is in Arizona. The man who hunts plover with a 10-gauge gun thinks he has the best gun on earth. He can kill birds farther than you can. He can also dive deeper and come up cleaner and jump farther than you can, and tell you who will be the next President.

"Upland plover shooting is usually not so good in the fall as it is in the spring, but it would be far better for all our sportsmen never to shoot a plover in the spring. When they reach the States of the Middle North, they are already paired and ready to nest; indeed, many and many will be found large with eggs. If we would but stop to think! If we would but lay up our guns for half the year in these times of lessening numbers! We do not think of our boys in the cradle. We are robbing our boys of all their game as rapidly as we can. We are leaving for them, not the heritage of health and strength and confident manliness which comes of skill at outdoor sports, but the narrow chest and white face of the counting-room. We do not mean that our boys shall ride and shoot; we want them to add and measure. We do not care that they shall keep alive either the hunter spirit, which is the warrior spirit, or the love of the outdoor air, which is the poet spirit. We want our boys to grow up thin and white. They will make more money then, and so the country will advance toward the happy state of those countries whose boys hire out as bare-legged models to painters in search of ruins.

"May our slim and sweet-voiced little bird long do its humble share toward preserving us from the hunterless days. No—more than that; let us preserve it, not simply from any selfishness or care for ultimate gain, but because it is one of Nature's own creatures, and because it is so cheerful and so confident, and because its voice is like the laugh of the girl we loved long years ago."

THE WILD PIGEON.

(*Columba livia.*)

By William Bruce Leffingwell.

IT takes no prophetic eye to look into the future, and, as all wise men judge it, by the past, to see that the greed of the human race will eventually wipe from the face of the earth the wild game of the fields, the fowls of the air.

While I have written many articles on subjects pertaining to field sports, never have I written one wherein the spirit of sadness pervaded the innermost recesses of my heart as does this one of "The Wild Pigeon." As a child, I was bred and reared among them; the gigantic oaks and hickories that threw their umbrageous shades o'er the roof of my home, were frequently the roosting-places of these now extinct birds, while the trees of the forests, beneath whose branches I passed so many of the summer hours in my boyhood, were enlivened by the sparkling colors of the pigeons as they sat in thick bunches basking in the sunshine, or teetered and cooed on the dead limbs of the trees over my head; then, again, I have often stood in the farm-yard, gazing in rapt admiration, as the setting sun was darkened by the traveling flocks, while flock after flock seemed to dissolve and extend into endless space, for while the darkness of night hid them from my view, the fluttering of their strong wings could long be heard after the day had

closed, and the earth had gone to rest. How pretty the sight! A sweeping line of graceful undulations, burnished by the setting sun with colors of blue and gold, while the purple and orange seemed to cast upon the clear sky a rosier hue. To one who has never seen wild pigeons in their flight, neither the tongue or pen of man can show its beauties, for when they skim the heights of the ancient trees, the air is alive with flitting colors, the world is on the move, and the very sky is filled with gladness. And now they are gone! Gone never to return; they who were ubiquitous, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the extreme North to the Gulf of Mexico; whose familiar forms were known to civilization in the East, the Indians of the West, the slaves of the South, and the inhabitants of the North; they are gone. They did not meet their fate because of disease, because necessity demanded it, but by reason of the power Divinity decreed, that the fowls and beasts should be subservient to the will of man. Having this power, and seeing in these birds a commodity which represented dollars and cents, these birds, to their destroyers, were only as meat, sought for and destroyed to bring to the pockets of their pursuers and persecutors money—just the same as cattle or swine. It wasn't done by sportsmen, for no man having the heart of a sportsman could go into a roost of pigeons and strike down the innocent fledgeling with a club, while its mouth was crying for food, and its mother fluttered and circled around it, try-

ing to win it with piteous cries to take wing and fly with her away from this threatening danger. It hardly seems possible, that the countless millions of a few years ago are now dead, and forever removed from our sight; but alas! it is too true. This month, the month of April, used to be the time of their coming; the season is the same, the same gentle, pattering rains; the warm south winds are blowing as freshly; the budding trees are swelling with a new life; the robins and the bluebirds have long been with us; the forests, the meadows, the streams, look as of old; the rivulets course as merrily through the timber-lands, and lose themselves in their meanderings; the sky looks the same, the same drifting clouds of white tinged with blue; the wind soughing as sweetly through the upland hills; the placid bosom of the Mississippi is disturbed by passing steamers, rolling along in grandest waves, that decrease as they are left from the boat, and gradually grow smaller and smaller, until they form tiny crests of white foam, or whirl in spinning eddies, to be dissolved in the swift current; but over the tree-tops, where I have so often seen myriads of pigeons flecking the sky with a deeper blue, to-day no living bird is in sight.

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods; there in the depths of the forest the cares of business are forgotten, and our life is renewed, sweetly rejuvenated, for we can not silently commune with Nature unless becoming better for it. Only yesterday, I wandered beneath the branches of the sturdy trees where years ago I passed so many happy hours, and the gap of twenty years was closed, and in imagination I was again one of the number waiting impatiently for the evening flight. Away off to the south, the mild wind carried to our expectant ears the faint boom of the first gun, a signal to us of the approaching hosts; then another shot; still another, and we traced

the coming birds by these frequent reports. No birds in sight, yet our signals of warning were unfailing, and when the deep roar of some gun a few hundred yards ahead of us rolled and echoed through the hills and valleys, the cry resounded along the hill-sides: "Down! Down! Here they come by the thousands!" At this time, the advancing flock seemed to rise out of the hill-tops far ahead of us, and everyone, man and boy, quickly secreted himself behind the first bush or tree and awaited the congregated flock's approach; then, when near enough, the shooter would arise and pour from his destructive gun the leaden hail, while the frightened flock would break its solid ranks and sheer from the dangerous place; but of no avail, for there were hunters secreted all through the woods, and "bang!" "bang!" the guns roared out, until, within a few acres space, perhaps twenty different hunters fired into the flock, while the birds separated at each report, and quickly came together again, veering from the spot where the ascending smoke was, or at times turning completely around, and then advancing by another route. As the day sped along, the flight increased until, at times, flocks of all sizes were to be seen, all flying in the same direction, but each succeeding flock followed its predecessor as accurately as if on a marked line. This peculiarity in their flight is noticeable, for they fly over the hills and dart down the vales in graceful, sweeping lines, which are particularly pleasing to one's sight. During their flight it was amusing to see the boys shooting them; all kinds of guns were represented, and fortunate the boy who owned a gun, for he was admired and envied by all his companions; they followed him with undisguised admiration, and their youthful voices were always first and loudest in asserting claims for disputed birds. The flocks were simply immense, and it was impossible, when many fired into the same flock, to tell who brought down the

birds; there was no chance for field etiquette, but to the captor belonged the spoils, and my young legs were as successful in swelling the number I took home, as the science I displayed in shooting. Science? It makes me smile now to think of it. Really, I never thought of such a thing as displaying science, for the birds were so thickly bunched together, that I blazed away into the densest portion of the flock; then, when one fell, no base-ball player ever dropped his bat quicker than I did my gun, and, like a streak, I lit out for the bird, frequently rolling over and over down the hill, or coming into contact with some other boy who was playing the same game. For a wonder, boyish fights were of rare occurrence; for there was a tacit understanding among the boys, that the first one having the bird in hand, when it was uncertain who shot it, held the legal right of ownership. This was very trying to our mothers; but one reinforcement of our pants at the knees, and on the places most used in taking the slides for the birds, usually lasted through the pigeon season. At this time, my shooting friends consider me to be a cool, deliberate shot, one not prone to excitement; but in those days—Well! I used to have a body-guard whose special duty was, one to watch that my ramrod didn't get lost, another my shot-bottle, another my powder horn, while the fourth was a general substitute, whose duty was to fill the vacancy in the event of desertion or disability of any of the regulars, and, in case the paper wadding was lost, to gather sufficient mullein-leaves to keep the battle raging. How I used to practice loading quickly! But my maneuvers at home and in the field were far different. A single-barrel muzzle-loader; trying to gauge and measure in the palm of my hand four fingers of powder after it was rammed into the barrel of the gun; then the same motions to go through with the shot, when all the while my chums were urging haste, while

the air above and around me was one fluttering mass of blue and red, and the spiked tails of the birds flitted just out of my reach. Excited! I was simply wild, and those boys rattled me still more with such exclamations as "Down!" "Down!" "Oh, *look* at them! right over your head." "There! there!" "Whale it into that bunch." "Bah! you never touched a feather." "Oh, hurry up! you're too slow." Then, when in my haste and excitement I poured the shot in first, one would exclaim: "Oh, Gosh! if he hasn't put in the shot instead of the powder." Confound those boys! It was many years ago that they said those things, and their voices still ring in my ears; but then at night I always forgave them, for we went home in the gloaming together, proud and happy, a nice bunch of birds for each to carry—the males tied in one bunch, with their pretty red breasts together, then both sexes mixed, tied, not by strings, but with the longest feathers of their tails, fastened in a knot at the silken ends, while the quill part was thrust through the lower bill. What blessed days those are to recall!—the days of our youth. No successes of after life can compare with them; for, in our maturer years, some day we find ourselves in the forest, and the mild, soft breeze of summer winds plays sweetest music through the trembling leaves, the birds sing their melody to our delighted ears, the grass is a deeper green, the violets a purer purple, and the sky a more lucid blue—for these scenes of Nature transport us back, we forget our existence as men, and, lifting the veil of years, we see ourselves, children in thought and deed, roaming in the forest, fishing at the stream, or gathering flowers in the meadows.

The immensity of some of these flocks of pigeons almost surpasses belief, and it is well for those of us who have seen and enjoyed these sights that there are living witnesses to substantiate what we say of them. In going

to their roosting-places, they annually flew up the Valley of the Mississippi, following the river in its windings. In this vicinity, they flew about a mile west of the city, sweeping up and down over the hills and valleys, resembling the long tail of a kite, that would be changed into serpentine form by the fitful wind. East of us, drifting rapidly and gracefully over the tops of the willows, oaks, and elms in the bottom-land, they darkened the shores of the western boundary of the State of Illinois. The tall bluffs of Fulton, sloping gently from the south, terminate abruptly at the north, and sink into miles and miles of bottom-lands, islands, and verdant fields; when they reached these bluffs, instead of dropping down and flying over the islands, they crossed the Mississippi River, meandered over the bluffs in Iowa, swelling the numbers that had passed over us, and disappeared in their tireless flight. At that time, I lived in Lyons, Iowa, one of the prettiest little cities on the Mississippi River—just such a spot as Nature intended for a town, providing it herself with all natural advantages. The hills arose back of us in gradual and lofty grandeur; climbing these hills, and brushing through the thick hazel-brush, we suddenly came unaware on the highest elevation of the hills, and here Nature had dispensed with trees, brush, and vines, and we stepped forth and beheld the most beautiful prairie, of the greenest grass, enlivened and beautified by the whitest daisies, the yellowest buttercups, and the purplest violets. Such was the "Little Prairie." Coming as a man would out of the dense forest, and unexpectedly stepping into this open land, the heart must be cold indeed that could not appreciate it. This spot was about three-quarters of a mile square, and was a succession of rolling hills; here it was that the hunters congregated from the town and waited for the evening flight. As they lounged around indolently, laughing, chatting, and tell-

ing stories, of a sudden some watchful eye would espy the dim outline of a flock in the distance. Instantly there was a great commotion among the hunters. "They are coming! They are coming!" would hurriedly be passed from mouth to mouth, and the hunters would at once disperse, seeking a place for concealment in the neighboring woods, or lie prone behind the sloping hills. What immense flocks passed over us there!

One bright afternoon, I was early on the grounds. The flight usually began about 5 o'clock, but this day there were so many birds moving, that it seemed as if they had consulted, and thought it best to obtain an early start. About half-past 3, a few scattering flocks dotted the horizon, and swept gracefully over the timber. I located myself so the sun shone on my back, and was under their line of flight. At first, they flew in flocks of from 300 to 500. Many of the flocks consisted entirely of males, then others of females. One could not imagine a prettier sight than a drove of the males, rising up over our heads as they swept on graceful wings out from the valley below. The sky was cloudless, except here and there tiny crests of white dotted and made deeper the blue background, while the setting sun cast its mellow rays on the purple heads, the blue necks and backs, the golden orange, the cinnamon and copper color of their breasts, until their sparkling feathers cast a sheen, and filled the air with brilliant colorings. The main body first appeared at 4 o'clock; the flock was fully 100 yards wide, and densely massed together. Shot after shot was fired into them, the only effect being a momentary opening; then they quickly closed together again, and advanced as before. Each moment I expected to see the end of this trailing army of crimson and blue, but there was apparently no end. Time and again the deep double report of some heavily loaded gun would roar through-

out the woods, the smoke waft over the tree-tops, dead or wounded birds drop to the earth, or with set wings sail gently lowering through the scraggy trees. Five o'clock, then 6 passed by, still no end to the flight—it increased if anything; the pure air was contaminated by the ever-present smoke, and the odor coming from the flying birds, while the guns kept up an incessant cracking. I had loaded and fired until my ammunition was expended; friendship ceased at this time, and my companions had "just a few loads left," and I could not borrow any from them; so, gathering my birds and tying them in a bunch, I stood my gun against a tree, and silently gazed in astonishment and admiration at the wonderful sight before and around me, for I intended remaining until I saw the last of this caravan, or until night shut it from view. The day drew speedily to a close; the sun sank to rest in a bed of crimson glory; the sky, brightened by the reflection of the sun, gradually lost its coloring, and was of a leaden hue. Whip-poor-wills flew screeching through the darkened sky, night-owls hooted and flitted through the woods, yet the flight never ceased; the mist arose in the valleys, the shades of night fast fell over the earth; the faint boom of distant guns was heard before and behind us, then, nearer, the guns themselves were to be seen; sheets of fire shot toward the heavens, and belched forth here and there along the hillsides; streaks and streams of flame suddenly and unexpectedly shot forth from hidden, darksome places. It was now dark; the stars glittered in the sky, and twinkled merrily at us. The birds could no longer be seen, except in a faint dark streak as we looked over us and toward the western sky, but the whistling of their wings, as they winnowed their way along, could be plainly heard. Nothing could be seen now, and, as I wended my way homeward, I heard frequent reports, and ever and anon

saw the rocket-like flame pierce the air, while the booming report followed it. How many pigeons were in that flight, no man could tell; it was the most astonishing sight, of the kind, I ever saw; there were not only thousands, but hundreds of thousands, in the flight that afternoon. I candidly believe there were more pigeons in that drove than there are game birds in the United States to-day. Our early ornithologists, Audubon, Wilson, and others, tell what may seem wonderful tales of the abundance of pigeons, but there can be no question of the birds having been as plenty as they say. The flight of the pigeons, when flying singly or traveling, is very rapid, its speed being estimated at 100 miles an hour; this speed is attained when darting through the woods or when in high flight. When going to and returning from their feeding-grounds, they follow the hills and ravines, searching for food, and do not fly at such great speed. Their food consists of corn, oats, wheat, berries, and rice, but more especially the acorns and beech-nuts—indeed, nuts of all kinds that they can swallow. These nuts are sought for on the ground, and are called under the general head of mast. Where mast can be found, there the birds congregate in immense flocks, devouring, in their voracity, and by reason of their numbers, all the food they can get at. Providence did not intend these birds should die of starvation, and provided them with the means of sustenance in their strong wings, and consequent powers of flight and endurance. They have frequently been found in the Eastern States, their crops filled with rice, which they only could have obtained in Southern fields. Distance has no effect on them when they are searching for food, and they will fly sixty or 100 miles to feed, then return to their roosts. They loved the forests; these shaded spots were their homes, for, as the poet says:

"The blue wild pigeons seek the deepest woods,
The loveliest forests of far Michigan,
Of the Minnesota and Kentucky realms,
Indiana woodlands and Ohio wastes;
And farther south, in Mississippi groves,
They swarming congregate in early spring,
And late in year their roosting-places seek"

Yes, they sought these several States, they wended their unceasing flight into the Territories; but, wherever they went, they were followed, not only by the hawks, the eagles, the vultures of the air, the wolves, foxes, vermin, and beasts of the fields, but by man, heartless, unpitying man, more unfeeling than their wild and inhuman enemies, who murdered them in their babyhood or pinched them to cruel death for a few paltry cents per dozen. It's a sad review of human character, to think that this has been done, and done in States where the violators were within easy reach of an outraged law. When the birds arrive at their feeding-grounds, they flutter along through the trees close to the ground, picking up mast, and hopping in short flight one over another, pell-mell, gulping down everything edible within their reach. When seen at a distance, at this time, they represent rolling billows of blue and white in the gray woods. When a breeding-place is chosen, then is a time of great excitement, and the destruction begins, as they appear with regularity, and the pigeon-netters and all interested parties are constantly on the watch for them. One of the most common and successful methods of bagging them was shooting from stands. These stands were made by cutting two poles eighteen or twenty feet long, then nailing them on uprights nine or ten feet high. The manner of building these stands and the place of putting them was as follows: The pigeon-shooter selected a stand directly in the line of flight, and near a piece of timber. It was necessary that the place selected should be open, so the

pigeons could alight on the ground, for if trees, bushes, or twigs were near, the birds would light on them. The shooter, therefore, picked out an open spot near the woods, from 100 to 200 yards, built him a small house of boughs, just large enough to hide him nicely, then paced off about thirty long steps and placed his first poles; these were nearest him, and a foot lower than those the farthest from him, the idea being that from the bough house the shot might follow an upward flight: the charge also had a chance to scatter, for the parallel poles were gradually separated, being perhaps a foot apart nearest the shooter, then from three to four feet at the other end; the result was, that the whole charge of shot was fired into the fluttering birds with great effect. A ten-gauge gun was usually used, loaded with an ounce and three-quarters of shot. As many as three dozen birds were killed, at times, at a single discharge of one barrel, one party telling me that he once killed seventy-one birds in two shots. After the place had been selected for a stand, around this spot grain was scattered to entice the birds; but the most effective way was to coax them down with stool-pigeons. These stool-pigeons were known as flyers or hoverers. When a flock was sighted coming toward the stand, the shooter selected one of the flyers, and tossed him into the air, his feet tied to a long string; the bird flew until the end of the string was reached, then, feeling it could go no farther, gradually lowered, settling softly onto the ground. At this time, from the bough house, there was called, rapidly, "keek," "keek," "keek," this cry being the kind the bird made when feeding or closely searching for food; then another flyer would be thrown up, then another. By this time, the attention of the incoming flocks would be attracted. To interest them still more, the strings attached to the hoverers would be pulled, their pedestals jerked from beneath

them, and weights dragged them slowly to the ground; their legs restrained and their wings free, naturally they used their wings constantly; this sight, to the birds coming in, had the appearance of birds fast alighting to feed. The flocks, after making two or three wide circles, would settle on the poles, and then the hunter quickly fired at them; experience had demonstrated that it would not do to wait too long before firing, but the shots must be made just after the first birds had settled on the poles, and while their companions were hovering over them. At times, they lit on one another in such dense quantities that the poles were broken. In the Eastern States, the birds were fond of alighting in the salt licks or beds, and all along their line of flight these stands were built, remaining year after year; no one thought of molesting them, and a hunter always held sacred the stand of another, and would never use one without the consent of the owner. Many of these stands were of local reputation, and had descended from sire to son, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It is a grand sight to see a flock of several thousand swoop down, decoyed into the fowler's stand. They will come along, sweeping and trailing over the hills and down the valleys, or in straight and steady flight high in air. Flyers will be thrown up, hoverers flutter to the ground, when suddenly the leaders of the flock espy the invitation to the feast, and with bowed and set wings begin their descent, cutting the keen air with vibratory wings; they can not and do not attempt to come down perpendicularly, but each bird tries to follow the path of its predecessor, and the long trail of purple, blue, and white descends like an avalanche, in appearance a huge inverted cone or spiral stream of life. As they wind around in a circle before alighting, and then cover the ground in a fluttering mass, they hover and flit over the earth, covering it at times to the depth of sev-

eral feet with their struggling bodies. One of the largest pigeon-roosts ever seen in the United States, was during the year 1878, at Petoskey, Mich. Professor Roney went to this roost for the purpose of protecting the birds, so far as he could, from the slaughter carried on by the attendants there. The reader can form an accurate idea of the immensity of one of these roosts from the following graphic description of Professor Roney:

"On reaching Petoskey, we found the condition of affairs had not been magnified; indeed, it exceeded our gravest fears. Here, a few miles north, was a pigeon-nesting of irregular dimensions, estimated, by those best qualified to judge, to be forty miles in length by three to ten miles in width, probably the largest nesting that has ever existed in the United States, covering something like 100,000 acres of land, and including not less than 150,000 acres within its limits. At the hotel, we met one we were glad to see, in the person of 'Uncle Len' Jewell, of Bay City, an old woodsman and 'land-looker.' Len had for several weeks been looking land in the upper peninsula, and was on his return home. At our solicitation, he agreed to remain for two or three days, and coöperate with us. In the village, nothing else seemed to be thought of but pigeons. It was the one absorbing topic everywhere. The 'pigeoners' hurried hither and thither, comparing market reports, and soliciting the latest quotations on 'squabs.' A score of hands in the packing-houses were kept busy from daylight until dark. Wagon-load after wagon-load of dead and live birds hauled up to the station, discharged their freight, and returned to the nesting for more. The freight-house was filled with the paraphernalia of the pigeon-hunter's vocation, while every train brought acquisitions to their numbers, and scores of nets, stool-pigeons, etc. The pigeoners were everywhere. They

swarmed in the hotels, post office, and about the streets. They were there, as careful inquiry and the hotel registers showed, from New York, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Maryland, Iowa, Virginia, Ohio, Texas, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, and Missouri.

"Hiring a team, we started on a tour of investigation through the nesting. Long before reaching it, our course was directed by the birds over our heads, flying back and forth to their feeding-grounds. After riding about fifteen miles, we discovered a wagon-track leading into the woods, in the direction of the bird-sounds which came to our ears. Three of the party left the wagon and followed it; the twittering grew louder and louder, the birds more numerous, and, in a few minutes, we were in the midst of that marvel of the forest, and Nature's wonderland—the pigeon-nesting. We stood and gazed in bewilderment upon the scene around and above us. Was it indeed a fairy-land we stood upon, or did our eyes deceive us? On every hand the eye would meet these graceful creatures of the forest, which, in their delicate robes of blue, purple, and brown, darted hither and thither with the quickness of thought Every bough was bending under their weight, so tame one could almost touch them, while in every direction, crossing and recrossing, the flying birds drew a net-work before the dizzy eyes of the beholder, until he fain would close his eyes to shut out the bewildering scene. This portion of the nesting was the first formed, and the young birds were just ready to leave the nests. Scarcely a tree could be seen but contained from five to fifty nests, according to its size and branches. Directed by the noise of chopping and falling trees, we followed on, and soon came upon the scene of action. Here was a large force of Indians and boys at work, slashing down the timber, and seizing the young birds as they fluttered from the nests.

As soon as caught, the heads were jerked off from the tender bodies with the hand, and the dead birds tossed into heaps. Others knocked the young fledgelings out of the nests with long poles, their weak and untried wings failing to carry them beyond the clutches of the assistant, who, with hands reeking with blood and feathers, tears the head off the living bird, and throws its quivering body upon the heap. Thousands of young birds lay among the ferns and leaves, dead, having been knocked out of the nests by the promiscuous tree-slashing, and dying for want of nourishment and care, which the parent birds, trapped off by the netter, could not give. The squab-killers stated that 'about one-half of the young birds in the nests they found dead,' owing to the latter reason. Every available Indian, man, and boy in the neighborhood was in the employ of buyers and speculators killing squabs, for which they received a cent apiece.

"The news of the formation of the nesting was not long in reaching the various Indian settlements near Petoskey, and the aboriginals came in tens and fifties, and in hordes. Some were armed with guns, but the majority were provided with powerful bows, and arrows with round, flat heads two or three inches in diameter. With these they shot under or into the nests, knocking out the squabs to the ground, and raked the old birds which loaded the branches. For miles, the roads leading to the nesting were swarming with Indians, big and little, old and young, squaws, pappooses, bucks, and young braves, on ponies, in carts, and on foot. Each family brought its kit of cooking-utensils, axes, a stock of provisions, tubs, barrels, and firkins to pack the birds in, and came intending to carry on the business until the nesting broke up. In some sections, the woods were literally full of them. With the aid of Sheriff Ingalls, who spoke

their language like a native, we one day drove over 400 Indians out of the nesting, and their retreat back to their farms would have rivaled Bull Run. Five hundred more were met on the road to the nesting, and turned back. The number of pigeons these two hordes would have destroyed would have been incalculable. Noticing a handsome bow in the hands of a young Indian, who proved to be a son of the old chief Petoskey, a piece of silver caused its transfer to us, with the remark, 'Keene, kensau mene sie' (Now you can go and shoot pigeons), which dusky joke seemed to be appreciated by the rest of the young chief's companions.

"There are in the United States about 5,000 men who pursue pigeons year after year as a business. Pigeon-hunters with whom we conversed, *incognito*, stated that of this number there were between 400 and 500 at the Petoskey nesting, plying their vocation with as many nets, and more arriving upon every train from all parts of the United States. When it is remembered that the village was alive with pigeoners, that nearly every house in the vast area of territory covered by the nesting sheltered one to six pigeon-men, and that many camped out in the woods, the figures will not seem improbable. Every homesteader in the country, who owned or could hire an ox-team or pair of horses, was engaged in hauling birds to Petoskey for shipment, for which they received $4 per wagon-load. To 'keep peace in the family,' and avoid complaint, the pigeon-men fitted up many of the settlers with nets, and instructed them in the art of trapping. Added to these were the buyers, shippers, packers, Indians, and boys, making not less than 2,000 persons (some placed it at 2,500) engaged in the traffic at this one nesting. Fully fifty teams were engaged in hauling birds to the railroad station. The road was carpeted with feathers, and the wings and feath-

ers from the packing-houses were used by the wagon-load to fill up the mud-holes in the road for miles out of town. For four men to attempt to effect a work having for opponents the entire country, residents and non-residents included, was no slight task.

"The majority of the pigeoners were a reckless, hard set of men, but their repeated threats that they would 'buck-shot us' if we interfered with them in the woods, failed to inspire the awe that was intended. It was four against 2,000. What was accomplished against such fearful odds may be seen by the following:

"The regular shipments by rail before the party commenced operations were sixty barrels per day. On the 16th of April, just after our arrival, they fell to thirty-five barrels, and on the 17th down to twenty barrels per day, while on the 22d the shipments were only eight barrels of pigeons. On the Sunday previous, there were shipped by steamer, to Chicago, 128 barrels of dead birds and 108 crates of live birds. On the next Sabbath following our arrival, the shipments were only forty-three barrels and fifty-two crates. Thus it will be seen that some little good was accomplished, but that little was included in a very few days of the season, for the treasury of the home clubs would not admit of keeping their representatives longer at the nesting; the State clubs, save one, did not respond to the call for assistance, and the men were recalled, after which the Indians went back into the nesting, and the wanton crusade was renewed, by pigeoners and all hands, with an energy which indicated a determination to make up lost time.

"The first shipment of birds from Petoskey was upon March 22d, and the last upon August 12th, making over twenty weeks, or five months, that the bird war was carried on. For many weeks the railroad shipments averaged fifty barrels of dead birds per day—thirty to forty

dozen old birds and about fifty dozen squabs being packed in a barrel. Allowing 500 birds to a barrel, and averaging the entire shipments for the season at twenty-five barrels per day, we find the rail shipments to have been 12,500 dead birds daily, or 1,500,000 for the summer. Of live birds, there were shipped 1,116 crates, six dozen per crate, or 80,352 birds. These were the rail shipments only, and not including the cargoes by steamers from Petoskey, Cheboygan, Cross Village, and other lake ports, which were as many more. Added to this were the daily express shipments in bags and boxes, the wagon-loads hauled away by the shot-gun brigade, the thousands of dead and wounded ones not secured, and the myriads of squabs dead in the nest by the trapping off of the parent birds soon after hatching (for a young pigeon will surely die if deprived of its parents during the first week of its life), and we have, at the lowest possible estimate, a grand total of 1,000,000,000 pigeons sacrificed to Mammon during the nesting of 1878."

I trust the knowledge obtained by the reader will be sufficient recompense to insure me a frank forgiveness for engrafting into this chapter so much of the language and experience of another; but many of our sportsmen, especially the younger members of the fraternity, wonder what has become of the birds that, a decade since, darkened the sky with their traveling hordes. The report of Professor Roney tells the tale, for there are not sufficient of any living animals to have taken from them the numbers that were taken from that pigeon-roost, and not speedily become extinct. Every day in the spring-time, the time when we used to see so many pigeons with us, flying so gracefully over the hill-tops, or high in air traveling northward, our thoughts revert to those good old times when they were so plenty with us; and we can not but think tenderly of the dead, for they are dead to

life, yet ever fresh in our memories, and the sky would seem gladder, the trees and grass a richer green, if they were only brought in contrast with the variegated colors of the pigeons resplendent in the light of the setting sun. We miss them more than any other birds, for with us we always looked forward in pleasant anticipation of their coming, for they were the companions and the mild associates of budding spring; and when we saw them skimming along just over the highest trees, looking for some expected place for alighting, seeking a spot to build their homes, we knew that,

> "In soft spring-time they seek some lone retreat,
> Where endless forests stretch their bowery realm,
> And here they build their nests and rear their brood;
> Here tender grass and underwood die out,
> And earth is strewn with wither'd branch of trees,
> Broken by weight of birds that roost above."

And then, when summer months have passed, when the leaves are tremulously falling to the earth, and the changing beauties of the maples awaken our admiration, "when ripe October kindles all the woods, flushing the oak and beech trees with a blaze," as if the pigeons knew how welcome they were, they brightened the heavens again in their homeward flights, wending their way toward their southern homes, where, in mid-winter, free from frost and snow and the piercing wintry winds of the North, they sought the ambrosial forests, and beneath the sunny skies, sitting basking in the warm sun's rays, they dozed the time away, listening to the tinkling of the surf on the beach, or the songs of the bright-plumaged birds that fluttered near, and favored them with sweetest melody in their constant serenadings.

SNIPE, AND SNIPE-SHOOTING.

By Thomas C. Abbott ("Recapper").

BROTHER sportsman, are you a snipe-shooter? If not, perhaps before trying the sport it were well to know a little of the natural history of the bird. He is a great traveler. Coues' "Birds of the Northwest" says: "Throughout the greater part of the United States the snipe is found only during the migrations, and in winter. It breeds, however, in Northern New England, and may do so along other portions of our northern border, though I have not so determined. It occurs in South America, Central America, Mexico, and the West Indies." Other authorities tell us that they breed from Nova Scotia to Virginia; that they breed at times in New Jersey, I feel pretty sure. Formerly it was the custom to shoot them during their spring migration, but I am glad to be able to say that this custom is now forbidden by law in most of the States. I can not refrain from saying here that the practice of spring shooting of any winged game was a most barbarous one, born of ignorance, and continued through thoughtlessness. That it is so fast being put down, is due to the fearless, persevering energy of one man, and that man is Dr. N. Rowe, editor of the *American Field*.

In the hunting for and shooting of other winged game, if the sportsman is a good shot, and has dogs of fair

average abilities, he can follow certain hard and fast rules and meet with success, supposing him to be in a country fairly well stocked with game; but in snipe-shooting, beyond the old rule of always working down-wind, this will not apply. And why? Simply because, of all our game birds, none are so erratic in their habits as the snipe. Every variation in temperature, every shift of the wind, is sure to be followed by a change in their feeding or lying grounds, and they will often shift their quarters even when these apparent causes are absent. One hour they may be very wild, the next, extremely tame; hence the novice, who, perhaps, may have been having good shooting, and is congratulating himself on the accommodating humor of the birds, may the same day, within a short time, be anathematizing them for their wildness or their seemingly causeless veering of quarters.

One of the golden rules in all game-shooting may be summed up in one word, and that word is, silence.

There may be other game as acute of hearing as the snipe, but if so, I do not know it; hence it follows, as a matter of course, that the more quietly you and your dogs work the greater will be the chance of success.

The next thing to be considered is the gun you will use. To give useful advice on this point, it is necessary to know the style of shooting of the one who asks for information. If you are a very quick shot, shooting the moment the bird rises, you will do best with the cylinder-bore. If, on the other hand, you are deliberate in your movements, waiting for the bird to get done twisting and dodging in his efforts to outflank you, then you need the choke-bore. As the walking in snipe-shooting is apt to be bad, every ounce in weight in the gun tells in a long tramp, and a gun of seven pounds weight, or less, is the thing. As to the gauge, each one has his fancy,

but the twelve-gauge is, to my mind, the best. I have tried shot of all sizes, from No. 5 to No. 10, and, taking Tatham's shot as the standard, I prefer No. 9. For a seven-pound, twelve-gauge gun, three drams of good

WILSON'S SNIPE.—JACKSNIPE.

powder and from one ounce to one ounce and an eighth of shot will be found to be very effective.

In the important matter of dogs, I agree fully with Frank Forester, that "the best dogs for snipe are the bravest, fastest, and best trained that can be got for money."

It is true that, on the rice plantations of the South, or on the wet prairies of the West, where snipe are often found in hundreds, a retrieving spaniel may seem to be all that is needed, the shooter doing the finding and flushing of the birds; but, as Forester says, "where would be the sport of such slow gunning?" To the true sportsman—the man who shoots for the sake of the healthful exercise, and *not* for the market—seeing the good work done by his dogs is by far the most enticing part of any shooting. As regards snipe-dogs, it may be said of them, as of the snipe-shooter, neither can ever become absolutely perfect at the work. Don't start, reader; I will explain. You may be a crack shot, have a dog, or a brace of dogs, so perfect on woodcock, grouse, and quail, and be yourself so thoroughly well up in all the habits of these game birds, that you never have any difficulty in outwitting them, but in snipe shooting you have a different bird altogether. After thirty years of constant experience with them, the writer might reasonably be supposed to know all their ways, yet such is not the case. Every time I go after them I learn something new, because of their changeableness of mood. In fact, about the only thing certain you can say of them is that they are very uncertain.

Dr. Lewis, in his *American Sportsman*, says that he has "never seen a good snipe-dog." Well, he was certainly unfortunate in his experience. I have seen them, and owned them. He also insists that the best days to shoot snipe are very windy ones, and that he can get nearer to them, and get more and better shots, on such days, and find and flush the birds himself, than can anyone on still days. He is wholly at variance with our best authorities on this point. Curiously enough, it so happens that Dr. Lewis, Forester, and myself have done the most of our snipe-shooting in the same State—New Jersey—and on grounds not very wide apart.

As an illustration of the advantage held by one working with goods dogs over one without a dog, let us suppose that we have two meadows, of twenty acres each in extent, and that on each of these meadows there are distributed forty snipe. Let two men, who are equally good shots, each beat over one of these meadows. To make the test complete, let half a gale of wind be blowing over one meadow, and only a gentle breeze over the other. Suppose one man to be aided by a brace of good snipe-dogs, and the other, who works over the windy meadow, to have no dog, but work on Dr. Lewis' plan, and find the birds himself. Let both begin at the same time; and now mark the inevitable result. The man with the dogs walks quietly down-wind, keeping near the center of his ground, and the dogs working to the right and left of him. The dogs will find every bird, and there being but little wind, they will not fly until forced to do so. The shooter need not turn aside, except when his dogs point, and so saves himself much walking; and in an hour, at the most, he has got, or driven off, all the birds on that piece of ground.

Now turn to the other shooter; doing all of the work himself, he must tramp over the whole ground to find his birds. Be as quiet as he may, he will unavoidably make some noise, and the strong wind behind him carries the sound far in advance of him to warn the birds. It being a strong wind, the birds know they can rise easily and fly fast, and the result is that they do so, oftentimes out of shot. Not having dogs to locate them, the shooter does not know when, where, or how they may flush, and he has to take shots at all sorts of angles, and sees a good many birds go off. Moreover, to find them all, he must do from four to six times the tramping done by the other man, and this takes a proportionately greater time. It takes no prophet to tell which of those two men will be

most fagged out at night, or which of them will have the most birds to show. No, no, reader, don't try the snipe in windy weather, for you will find "the game is not worth the candle."

Aside from the knack of hitting them, snipe are not hard to kill. One or two pellets of shot will bring them down, and it is seldom that they fly far if hit.

After advising caution in approaching a hit snipe, which has been marked down, Forester says that he has "seen a wounded one, after being marked down to a square yard of ground, get away, and this after the ground had been beaten over by a brace of capital dogs, and as many men." Now if any man ever knew just what constituted a brace of "capital dogs," he did; but I can not imagine how a "brace of capital dogs" could go up to within a yard of a wounded snipe and not wind it, when it is a well-known fact that dead or wounded birds are readily located by dogs, and this, too, when they have failed to scent unhurt birds in the immediate vicinity. Possibly I may have been more than usually fortunate in my experience, but I can say truly that, in all the years I have shot, I have lost but one dead or wounded snipe. It is true I was attended on that occasion by dogs which were excellent at retrieving, an accomplishment which I seem to have an inborn knack of teaching; but had I known then, as I now know, that snipe can swim well for short distances, I am confident that I should not have lost even that one bird. I will give the incident here: It was in the month of April, before I had realized the wrong of shooting snipe in spring. I was, at the time, walking along the edge of one of a series of high knolls, separated by water on three sides. Suddenly, in front of me, and not over thirty yards away, two birds arose. One turned to the right, and it was instantly killed; the other, bearing away to my left, and flying

fast, received my second shot, but I aimed not quite far enough in advance of him, and failed to stop him. He was hit, however, and flew but about 100 yards, and dropped upon the far edge of the farthest knoll to my left. Keeping my eyes on the spot, I went there at once, after one of my setters had retrieved the dead bird. On reaching the place, my dogs took the scent, but failed to find the bird. It had not flushed, or I should have seen it; and there was no cover for it to have hidden in. After long searching by my dogs and myself, I gave it up; but I am now satisfied that that snipe entered the water, there about twenty yards wide, and swam over to a wet thicket on the farther shore. Had I sent one of my dogs across the water, that bird would have been bagged, for if he had flushed again, he would have done so within easy range.

So far, all writers, while they admit that during the spring migration snipe resort to other grounds than the open meadows, make no mention, so far as I know, of their being anywhere except on the open meadows during autumn; and some claim that they are to be found only on the open ground. This latter claim I have found to be a mistake. During the autumn, I have found them along neglected meadow ditches overhung by large willow trees, and again, hidden in the reeds along the banks of creeks. Though Forester asserts positively that at this season they never go there, I have shot them repeatedly in wet woodland meadows, and on high meadows overgrown with tussocks of coarse grass, where the ground was hard, and as dry as the inside of a powder-canister.

One fact worth mentioning is, that I have found them in such spots only during the middle of the day, and I have always believed that, after feeding during the morning hours, they retire to such places to dress and preen their feathers, and perhaps to take a digestive

snooze; hence, I would urge it upon the sportsman that, if he knows that there are any birds on the ground, and fails to find them in their usual hiding-places during the noon hours, he should try such places as I have named. He may not find many birds, but if he watches those he does find, and which go off unshot at, they will almost invariably go to where the main body of the birds are, and thus guide him to good shooting.

The snipe is a bird of strange ways, and the sooner you recognize that fact, the sooner will you become expert in finding them. As they do not give out a strong scent, do not be in a hurry to find fault with your dog because he points, and you fail to flush the birds at once on going up to him. Wild as they are in general, they will, at times, squat till almost trodden upon. To show how cunning they are, I will relate the trick one tried to play on me. I was, at the time, working a red and white setter—the grandest and most trustworthy snipe-dog I have ever seen. The dog had worked over a low, wet place without finding game, and had, with myself, reached the high, dry ground. Suddenly he turned, and pointed where the ground was entirely bare, and close to where a fence had been standing. On walking up to him, no bird flushed, and so devoid of all cover was the ground, that I could have seen a sparrow had one been there. I spoke to the dog, and for an instant he looked up in my face and wagged his tail, and then straightened out again. I began to think that, for once, dear old Monk was wrong, but I was too old a hand to show him I thought so. I walked out in front of him for some yards, walked around on the meadow, and still nothing flushed. Coming back to him, I walked up to a post-hole about a foot deep, when up, with a "scaipe, scaipe," rose a snipe. I was so completely taken with surprise, that the wonder is I did not make a clean miss, yet I cut

him down neatly. I turned and looked at Monk's face, and I tell you, reader, the look I saw there was to me, at once, one of reproach and of gratitude—reproach that my manner had shown a doubt of his trustworthiness, gratitude that I had done my part equally as well as he had done his. Perhaps it is needless to add that I never doubted him again. Now that snipe knew that he was in very unusual quarters, and, not seeing or hearing the dog, thought, perhaps, that I should fail to find him, and so kept still till I was almost in the act of treading upon him.

Possibly the reader may think I am giving birds credit for too much sense, but if he had seen as much of their ways as I have, he might change his mind. I will relate another strange occurrence. One pleasant afternoon in October, 1871, I concluded to see if I could find a snipe. Taking the dog above named, and his brace-mate, a dark liver-and-white setter bitch, I started over the meadows I knew so well. After working over all but one of them, and failing to find any sign of a snipe, I started homeward across the yet unhunted meadow. About midway in it, there was a wet, springy place, not over ten feet square, and on nearing this spot both dogs pointed. When I walked up to them, up rose a snipe, which I killed. No more birds were found, and I returned to the house. Knowing that there may be no snipe to be found on one day, and plenty of them the next, I looked upon this one bird as a sort of pioneer of a flight yet to come. The next day I worked the meadows all over again, and with the same result as before; no birds anywhere about, except where I found the first one, and there only one, which I killed. Now comes the strange part of it; for three more successive days, I found and killed on each day one snipe in that same place, and on those 500 acres of meadow could find no

others. How did each of those birds come in there just at the right time to have the place to himself, and how was it that, on so large a stretch of good feeding and lying ground, each of those birds happened to select that particular spot to stop in? I leave it for wiser heads than mine to answer.

Let me give a word or two of advice to the intending snipe-shooter. If you are in a strange part of the country, and are, therefore, unacquainted with the ground over which you intend shooting, try to find someone who knows the nature of the meadows. You can almost always succeed in this, and, for a reasonable compensation, get a man or a boy to devote at least a day to showing you over the meadows. Get him to point out any deep, treacherous spots, where, if you were to go, you would run the risk of getting sunk in a spring-hole, or a bed of quicksand. Oftentimes, good snipe-grounds abound in such places. If there are any ditches, as there almost always are, have your guide show you the places where they can be forded safely, or crossed in other ways. If the ground be intersected with small creeks, too deep to ford, and these creeks be tributaries of some larger stream bordering the meadows, have your man get a boat and keep it where it can be got at handily, so that he can at any time set you and your dogs across. This will oftentimes save you and the dogs much walking which otherwise were unavoidable. If the main stream be affected by the tides, ascertain when the tide will be rising, as then will be the best time for you to be on hand. The rising tide will drive the birds from the lower grounds to the higher meadows, confining them within narrower limits, where they may more easily be reached. Ground which at low tide you might be able to walk over with ease, will at high tide be so far under water that a boat will be necessary for

getting over it. By having the boat, you will be enabled to outmaneuver another shooter not so far-sighted as yourself; and while he is laboriously toiling around the heads of the streams, you will be getting the cream of the sport.

Although, as a rule, the birds will be well out on the meadows, the rule, like many others, has its exceptions. Consequently, if you do not find so many birds there as you think are in the neighborhood, turn your attention to the sides of the meadows. Never neglect to work over small wet spots on the dryer and higher parts of the ground. Spots which may seem, to the novice, too small to be worth investigating, are often found to hold birds. I have found and flushed from one to five birds out of little wet spots not more than five feet square, and all such places are worth looking through.

Never hurry over your ground in snipe-shooting. The snipe being but a small bird, and one of weak scent, as compared with the grouse or the quail, you should give your dog, or dogs, every chance to locate the game. Owing to the constant evaporation going on from the moist ground on which they are found, snipe leave little or no foot-scent. From learning to feel in the air for the body-scent, your setter or pointer will get the correct habit of working with a high head. He will learn the absolute necessity of turning to investigate the very faintest indication of the presence of his game, and from this, and from learning to work down-wind from the gun, he will, when once he has become a fine dog on snipe, become all the quicker a crack dog on game of stronger scent. I am well aware that Southern and Western sportsmen argue the very reverse of this. I think I understand their position fully, and it is this: With them, snipe are so plentiful, and so many of them are found near together, that in the mere matter of making

a large bag a retriever answers every purpose. Moreover, if working a setter or a pointer at all inclined to be nervous, the constant cautioning and chiding of such a dog, if fast, would have a tendency to discourage him, and make him slow. While I fully admit that the argument is a good one as applied to those localities, and others where snipe are so abundant, it will not apply where the birds are scarce. With my snipe dogs, I have more than once beaten, in the open fields and hill-sides of Monmouth County, New Jersey, both on snipe and quail, dogs which had been reared there, and knew the grounds better than my dogs. Again, I have done the same thing in our Jersey pines, on the same game, and all because my dogs had been taught both speed and caution on that tricky little rascal, the Wilson's snipe. For this reason, though many may disagree with me, I contend that a young dog who is very good on snipe will, if taken West or South, become good on grouse and quail far more quickly than if introduced to those birds *there* without the previous work on snipe *here*. I have no desire to seem dictatorial, but write as experience has taught me, and I feel sure that every old snipe-shooter, in this part of the country, will bear me out in saying that it is far easier to make a dog good on any other game than it is to make him equally good on snipe here.

Though the true sportsman is never inclined to overlook the comfort of his dogs at any time, it is especially needful to be careful of the snipe-dog. It is work particularly trying to the dog, as he is in mud and water the whole time he is at work. Therefore, immediately on coming in from your shoot, bathe him clean of all mud, and then rub him with a dry, coarse cloth. See if his feet be cut, or his ears torn by briers, and clean out the latter with a soft, moist sponge. If any scratches or thorn-wounds show, anoint them with vaseline; then feed

your dog, and allow him, if the weather is at all cold, an hour's nap before the fire. A dog so cared for will last as long again as if allowed to go dirty, if not hungry, and to sleep in some cold, damp, draughty kennel; and I repeat that a good dog is always worth the best and kindest care you can give him.

I have often been asked which I prefer for the work, the setter or the pointer. It depends entirely upon the locality in which you intend shooting. If I were going to shoot in the Southern or the Southwestern States, I should choose the pointer, as, not only in autumn, but throughout the winter, the temperature of both the air and the water is mild and pleasant. Moreover, the pointer is somewhat more easily trained than the setter, and not quite so much inclined to have a will of his own. From his coat being short, he carries less mud in it, and dries off more quickly than the setter; but, for the more Northern States, the setter is the dog. His longer coat keeps him warmer, evaporation is less rapid, and less danger exists of his being struck down with pneumonia or crippled with rheumatism—snipe-dogs being peculiarly liable to the last-named disease as they advance in years. Aside from these considerations, I have no prejudices in favor of, or against, either breed. I have seen too many noble dogs of either breed (and have owned some of each myself) to allow me to speak or think depreciatively of either.

"And now, young brother sportsman, you have not yet tried snipe-shooting on our Jersey meadows; shall we spend an hour or two at the sport? Ah! you second the motion, do you? All right; and now let us see your gun. Well, you are in luck. Yes, I see it is a twelve-bore, with twenty-eight-inch barrels. What does it weigh? Six and three-quarters pounds. Well, that makes a mighty handy gun. Mine is a seven-pound hammerless, of

the same gauge and length as yours. You say yours is a modified choke in the right barrel, a full choke in the left. Mine is full choke in both barrels, and I sometimes think I will have the choke taken down a little. I like both barrels to shoot alike, as I always fire them in alternation; but the full choke don't exactly suit my snap-shot style of shooting. Come, let us be off, for it is a beautiful morning in that loveliest of the months—October.

"Let us try this open pasture meadow; it is high, and, for the most part, dry, but the dogs can take off their wire edge on it. Yonder, you see, are one or two low places, and they are almost always wet.

"Look at my dogs; you see they don't go through those places as a green dog would be likely to, but along the down-wind side, or, as a sailor would say, on the leeward side.

"There! the bitch has a point, and the dog is backing her. Well, I did not expect we should find a bird quite so soon. Only a lark, you say. No, siree! my dogs don't point larks; but come up and take the shot.

"There! stand where you are; I'll put him up. Well, that was cleanly done. He did twist about some when he first got up, but you let him go just to the right spot before you pulled on him.

"Now here is a wet meadow, with quite a creek winding through it. Yonder, about the center, you see those old flood-gates; go right out to them, and cross over the stream there. That is the most likely ground, and the best walking, too. Take the red and white dog with you; he will work for you while I am in sight. I'll keep the bitch, for she will work for no one but me. Let the dog have his own way, and give him no orders, except to tell him to retrieve when you have a bird down; and now go ahead."

SNIPE-SHOOTING.

An hour has passed, several shots have been fired by both, and now we come together.

"Well, what luck? You fired, let me see, sixteen shots; what have you to show for them? Only nine birds, you say. Well, let me tell you, that is doing right well for a new hand; I have done worse myself many a time, though I have done pretty well to-day. I had ten shots, six single and two double ones, and have all the birds here.

"And now, as you have to leave by the next train, we have only time to get home. We have no need to grumble, for twenty birds out of twenty-six is a score we need not be ashamed of."

This is but a faint, a very faint, outline of many a day I have had on those meadows. I fear I shall never have such sport again; certainly, I am not likely to on those same meadows.

I have said that I believe the Wilson's snipe sometimes breeds in New Jersey. My reason for so thinking is all based upon two slight incidents, coming under my personal observation. On July 4, 1867, I had a relative, then living in Philadelphia, Penn., come up to see if he could find any woodcock on our meadows. I had little hope of finding birds, for the two preceding months of May and June had been very rainy. This enabled the birds to remain in the little upland swamps, which at other times were too dry.

My prediction proved correct, for we found in a morning's long walk only three woodcock; but, on a meadow adjoining those of my old home-farm, my dogs found, and I flushed, an adult Wilson's snipe. I could have shot the bird easily enough, but did not molest it, for I felt sure it had a nest or young near by. On the 11th day of the following September, I found and shot two well-grown but not fully feathered snipe, not 200 yards from where

I had flushed the old bird on the 4th of the preceding July. They were the fattest snipe I ever saw; for, to use a common expression, they were "just like lumps of butter." Neither of them could fly more than 100 yards at a stretch, and their feathers were so much lighter in color than that of an adult bird, that I did not recognize them for snipe when they flushed, or I would not have shot at them. Coupling their inability to fly far with the fact of their exceeding fatness, it is fair to say that they were bred in the immediate vicinity. Coupling these two facts with the previous one of my flushing an old bird from so near by, only six or eight weeks earlier in the season, I think it will be admitted that I have a right to think that those birds all belonged to one family, and that the young were hatched on those meadows. Furthermore, I worked over those meadows with my dogs two or three times a week thereafter, and I find, by reference to my shooting-notes, that the autumn flight of snipe did not begin to be seen, in that year, till October 8th, which was within a few days of being one month later.

The earliest date on which I have ever shot snipe in spring was on the 24th of February, 1866; yet the next year my first birds were killed on the 28th of March. I have shot them so late as the 12th of December, and it is not an uncommon thing for them to winter quite far north. We should hear of it far oftener than we do, but that sportsmen, during autumn, turn their attention to larger game.

Sportsmen of the West and Southwest are somewhat excusable for wishing to shoot them in spring, since in those sections they are frequently driven off by the dryness of the grounds in the autumn, and if they were not shot during the spring flight, they would not be found at all. That they are shot there almost entirely without the aid of dogs, other than retrievers, is due to the fact

that they are found in such great numbers, and so easily. It is not by any means an uncommon thing for a good shot to kill from fifty to 100 birds in a day. Tastes differ, and to me the working of the dogs, and not the size of the bag, is the measure of the sport, and, for that reason, I would rather kill twenty birds over a brace of fast, well-trained, keen-nosed setters or pointers than 200 with a mere retriever. Tastes also differ as to the edible qualities of game; but, in the writer's estimation, no bird surpasses the snipe as a table delicacy.

During the spring flight, snipe do not resort only to the meadows. Wet upland pastures, corn-stubbles, the sides of ditches, and wet spots on fields of upstanding winter wheat or rye, will be found to be frequented by them. In cold, windy weather, they resort to open, wet woodlands, alder and willow thickets, or places on the marshes protected from the wind by tall rushes.

It is a mistake for the novice to suppose that every marsh is good ground for snipe. If the soil is of a sour nature, the worms they delight in will not be found there, and neither will the birds. They never come in the spring till the frost is well out of the ground, so that their feed will be plentiful, and easily reached; and instinct teaches them that warm spring rains have a tendency to bring about the proper conditions.

On their first coming, they are thin and worn down, but, if they be undisturbed, and feed be plentiful, they soon become fat and lazy in bright, still weather. The feed must be plentiful indeed, for a snipe will consume from three to four times his weight of food in a day. Beyond having to look for them in places to which they rarely resort in autumn—such places as I have named—the shooting of them differs in nowise from that in autumn.

How best to shoot them is a mooted point. I always take them the instant they flush, unless very close by;

others wait till they steady in their flight, and do good shooting.

Although most of their migrating is done at night, they sometimes fly in dark weather. They can frequently be heard passing overhead at night, as they keep up the well-known cry of "scaipe, scaipe." The drumming, as it is called, which is so often referred to by other writers and sportsmen, is a thing I have never seen them do. Neither have I ever heard them "chuckle like laying hens," nor seen them "perch upon fences or trees." I can not doubt their doing these things, as the facts are too well substantiated to admit of doubt, and it is well known that these are habits of the mating and breeding season.

I sometimes wonder how many sportsmen there are who have had the good fortune to observe a migrating flock of snipe coming onto the meadows. I have had the good luck to see it twice in my experience—once in the spring and once in autumn. By mere chance, it happened, on both occasions, that I was out without a gun, merely giving my setters a race. It also happened that both times the birds came in on the same meadow. It was one of some twenty acres of ground, and one which during the summer was dry, and from which hay was cut. Though it was only about a mile from home, there were no birds to be found on my return with my gun, though to get it I was, in neither instance, absent over three-quarters of an hour; nor could I find any birds on the adjacent meadows. They had dropped in only for a little rest.

In boring for their food, snipe make holes in the mud which look as if a thin pencil had been pushed into the ground. You may, however, find many of these borings, yet find no birds, they having changed their quarters; but should you see the droppings of the birds where the

ground is at all wet, you may know the birds are near at hand, or have just left. On dry spots, the droppings remain plain to the sight for days, but on wet ground speedily lose color, and are absorbed by the soil.

I have noted elsewhere that it is best to look for the game on bright, warm days, when little wind is blowing. They are loath to rise at such times, but on raw, cold, windy days they will be wild and uneasy.

I have before me an excellent little chapter on snipe as they are found in the Western States, from which I quote. Unfortunately, I do not know who the writer is, so can not give him credit, as I would like to:

"Snipe are as eccentric in their habits as when on the wing. At times, in the spring, they come early and tarry late, affording most excellent sport throughout the season. Again, they feed on the open marshes mostly by night, and with the earliest dawn hie away into the inaccessible center of the slough, or among the low brush-wood growing up in or close by the marsh, or even upon the near uplands, where they rise always far out of range. A peculiarity of good snipe-ground is its seeming inexhaustibility. On a well-stocked snipe ground, you raise possibly 100 birds to-day, and kill off a couple of dozen. To-morrow, there seem about as many, and your success corresponds with that of yesterday: so through a whole week, perhaps, with apparently no marked addition or subtraction from the quantity of game when you desist."

Always hunt snipe with the wind on your back, as they seem to require the resistance of the wind to enable them to rise quickly. By working in this way, the birds lie closer, and you get shots nearer at hand, for, as they spring up in the face of the wind, they will present to you side-quartering shots. They are not a hard bird to kill, as one or two pellets of No. 8 or 9 shot will stop them. As

to hitting them, that is another matter, for out of twenty birds flushed no two may rise in the same way, and you must watch how they rise, and vary your tactics on each individual bird.

In looking for them, and especially during the spring migrations, look for them wherever there are moist spots of ground. This, besides including the open marshes, also includes wet places on corn-stubble, grain-stubbles, pasture-fields, and, if there be a raw, cold wind, open, wet woodlands and half-filled old ditches.

In bright, warm weather, with low southerly winds, during the morning and afternoon hours the open meadows and marshes are the grounds.

Work your grounds over slowly and thoroughly, since, though one or two birds may be in an unaccommodating humor, and flush far out of range, the next one may lie up close, and let you pass him, unless carefully looked for.

Snipe are given many names by the country people, but their true title is the Wilson snipe—*Scolopax Wilsonii* of the early naturalist, *Gallinago Wilsonii* of the later ones. "English snipe" and "jacksnipe" are both misnomers, as the names of two birds found in the British Isles are given to a single bird.

As in snipe-shooting you are most of the time on wet ground, it is well, particularly in the spring, when both water and the soil beneath it have the chill of winter yet in them, to keep the feet dry, if possible. Therefore use long rubber boots, and, with moderate care and some knowledge of your ground, you may escape wet feet, and a possible attack of pneumonia. With the exception of duck-shooting, there is more exposure to wet in snipe-shooting than in any other sport.

Remember (as I have already pointed out) that not every piece of low, wet ground is necessarily good ground.

If the soil is sour, or washed by mineral springs, the worms the birds feed on will not be there, and, as the snipe is a ravenous feeder, he will not go onto such places, though they will come to good feeding ground as soon in the spring as the frost is out so that they can reach their food, and on such grounds, and in good weather, will most probably be found day after day. Hence, if you do not find them to-day where yesterday there were plenty of them, do not be discouraged, but try other ground, and return to the old quarters on the morrow.

Every sportsman has his favorite game, but, though I am fully cognizant of the delight of shooting other game, the snipe, because of the eccentricity of his ways, is and ever will be my favorite game bird. Next to him I rank the woodcock.

I have spent many happy days in the pursuit of snipe, and feel to them a lasting indebtedness for that pleasure. I have written of them as I have found them, relying upon other authors as little as possible, and giving the results of such experience and observation as unlimited opportunities have favored me with.

If anything I have written should be of any use to some young brother of the trigger, or should call up in the minds of old hands at snipe-shooting memories of past pleasant days with the long-bills, my work will not have been in vain. Much that has been written of them by writers like Forester, I could have reproduced here, but the desire not to be tedious has kept my pen within bounds, and had I written a volume on the subject, I do not feel that I could have written more to the purpose.

WESTERN FIELD SPORTS IN EARLY DAYS.

By Samuel C. Clarke,
Author of "Fishes of the East Atlantic Coast," Etc.

"Old men forget, yet shall not all forget,
But they'll remember with advantage
What feats they did that day."

Shakespeare, King Henry V.

IT was in October, 1839, that the writer landed in Chicago, from the lake steamer *Illinois*, which plied between Buffalo and Chicago, no railroads then existing west of Central New York. Chicago then contained less than 5,000 people, living on half a dozen streets running parallel with the river, on its north and south banks.

The West Division was then hardly existent, and a low, wet prairie extended from the Chicago River to the Des Plaines—twelve miles—a wide sea of grass, embellished with flowers. At that time, there were only three or four brick buildings on Lake Street, on which, with South Water Street, the main business of the town was done. It was in that year that the first shipment of wheat, about 150 bushels, was made to Buffalo, and it was thought worthy of record that, in 1840, 1,000,000 feet of lumber were sold in a city since become the largest lumber market in the world. In fact, times were dull; the great land boom of 1836 had expended its force, and lots which two years before had sold for thousands, now sought in vain for purchasers at any price. Some people

thought that Chicago was a failure, and were going back East, or north to the more prosperous village of Milwaukee. But living was very cheap; the writer boarded for $2 a week at the City Hotel, where venison, grouse, ducks, and white-fish covered the board. So the more hopeful of us concluded to stay and wait for better times.

There were three brothers of us, all living in Chicago, and all fond of field sports, and as business was so dull that one of us could easily look after the store, the others could improve the great opportunities offered in the way of shooting and fishing.

I was then over thirty years old, and had been a wanderer in many lands, and had been where game was plentiful, but had never seen anything like the abundance of fur and feather there was in Northern Illinois. The Sac and Fox Indians had been removed a few years before from this region, which they naturally were unwilling to leave, and all kinds of game had increased since their departure.

The day after my arrival, my brother drove me out a few miles to a farm where the prairie fowl abounded. In summer they were found all over the prairies, but in the fall they collected about the grain-fields. Our old pointer, Phil, soon came to a point, and we left the wagon with our guest; but when a flock of twenty or thirty birds, as big as barn-door fowls, rose from the stubble with a roar of wings, I stood bewildered. My brother, however, brought down a bird with each barrel. They fell on the sod, thump, and I picked up my first pinnated grouse, a bird, in my estimation, at the head of American game. To those accustomed to its noisy way of rising, this bird is not difficult to kill, but I have known the best Eastern shots, men who could cut down the ruffed grouse as it dodged among the trees, or the snipe as it

flew zigzag over the meadows, unable to stop a prairie hen on the first day's shooting.

These birds are usually hatched, in broods of twelve to fifteen, in May, and on the 1st of August shooting was allowed, though the young birds were not really large enough to be killed till September, their flight being still weak and their flesh insipid; but it was so easy to kill the half-grown birds, that the gunners usually did it, though the sportsmen waited till the grouse were strong on the wing and had a game flavor.

I was once crossing the prairie west of Chicago, late in July, with a friend, on our way to some woodcock grounds, when we saw a couple of Germans shooting the young grouse. My friend, who was a very free-spoken man, called out to them as we passed: "Say, boys, why don't you suck the eggs?"

We had in Chicago at that time many good dogs, not valued at hundreds of dollars, as in these wealthy times, but well bred, and good workers in the field. In fact, if a dog was well bred it was easy to train him, where grouse were so abundant. There was a large breed of liver-and-white setters, which, from their size, could easily be seen in the long grass. They were called the "Southport" setters, from a town where they originated. I have seen a young dog of this breed, which had never seen a bird in the field, taken out in the morning with a trained dog, and before night the youngster would stand as stanchly as the old dog.

I had myself a brace of pointer pups, out of old Phil, which, at six months old, never having been off my premises, were taken by me to a field near town where I thought birds were to be found. While I was fastening my horse, the young dogs jumped the fence and disappeared. I followed, and found them afar off, apparently standing birds; as I approached, I saw the remarkable

sight of two young dogs, which had never before seen or scented game, one at a point, the other backing him. When I came up, I flushed a brood of young grouse, and the dogs, although much excited, did not attempt to chase – a remarkable instance of education transmitted through many generations of trained dogs. Phil, the father of these puppies, was a famous dog in his day; he would retrieve his birds when ordered, and even go into the water for ducks, if allowed. He has more than once pointed a covey with a dead bird in his mouth, and I have seen him come to a point on the top rail of a fence as he was jumping over, scenting birds in the next field. When grouse ran before him, and he feared that his master would not get up in time to shoot, he would back out, run around the covey, and bring them to a halt, never flushing them, and would fetch the wounded birds before the dead ones, knowing, as it seemed, that the wounded ones might escape. He would hunt with anyone he knew, but if the hunter shot badly, would leave in disgust, and go home. He was often stolen, but always returned in a few days, sometimes with a rope around his neck, foot-sore and weary, as if he had traveled far. He was a strongly built, liver-colored dog, with a white spot on his breast; lived to a good old age, and left many descendants of value in and about Chicago. I have owned many dogs of various breeds, but I think that this pointer, Phil, was the most intelligent of his race—perhaps because he lived day and night at his master's side, and so became almost human in his ways.

Grouse being so plenty, of course large bags were made—thirty or forty to a gun in a day. My friend J. E. M——, a wonderful shot, once drove from Fox River to Chicago in a day—forty miles—and killed about 100 grouse on the way, with one dog. As full-grown grouse were worth only $1 a dozen at Chicago, there was little

shooting for the market. A sportsman could easily kill all he wanted for himself and friends, and was not apt to play the hog.

I once tried the experiment of keeping this bird in captivity in winter, when the farmers used to catch them alive in traps and bring them to town for sale. I put about 100 in a large garret, and fed them on corn and wheat, but they never got tame enough to bear the sight of me, and flew up against the roof at my approach, wounding and killing themselves, and the cocks would fight furiously together. By spring, four were left alive out of the 100, and those poor in flesh, so I turned the survivors loose.

I once turned out a cock grouse, with clipped wings, among my poultry; but they would not associate together, and when his wings grew out again, he flew away. I have heard that grouse have been tamed, but think they should be hatched by a hen to make a success of it.

About 1842 or 1843, I found a covey of grouse on the prairie, somewhere near Michigan Avenue and Twelfth Street, as it now is, and we killed some of them. These, I think, were the last shots fired by us within the limits of the present City of Chicago.

We had woodcock-shooting in summer along the Chicago River, and in the sloughs along the lake shore. In the timber along the Des Plaines River, woodcock abounded. I was there once with Dr. J. T. T——, who was one of the best shots I ever saw. We put up many birds that day. Out of twenty shots, Doctor T—— killed eighteen birds, and that in thick cover—a feat hard to surpass. I always liked to shoot with this gentleman, for he gave me the easy shots, and if I missed the birds, he would bring them down.

Doctor T—— used to hunt in early days with the famous Capt. Martin Scott, who commanded the garrison in Chi-

cago, and was afterward killed in Mexico. I asked the Doctor whether Scott could outshoot him. "I usually got as many birds as the Captain," said he, "for he was so careful of his reputation of being a dead shot, that he picked his shots, while I blazed away at everything that came along." I doubt if there were two men in America who could have got more game of any kind in a day than Captain Scott and Doctor T——. They were both men of untiring muscle, with the piercing black eyes generally found in successful hunters.

There were many good shots in Chicago at that time, game being so plentiful that all who had a taste for field sports could easily gratify it.

After the grouse, came quail, for those who cared for small game; then came the ducks, which were to be found in every river, creek, pond, and slough.

In 1840, there was an old swing-bridge at Randolph Street, the only means of crossing to the West Division, which contained not more than a dozen buildings. Above Madison Street, the river banks were uninhabited till you came to a small farm, half a mile up the south branch. I have killed many ducks in the river just above Madison Street bridge. In the fall and spring, this whole West Division was a wet prairie, the haunt of curlew, snipe, and other wading birds. The rare and beautiful bird known as Wilson's phalarope used to breed in these marshes, and I supplied Eastern collectors with specimens. I have seen the snipe so abundant in that region, now the most populous part of Chicago, that you could not walk a rod without flushing one of the long-bills, and perhaps the next day they would all be gone.

For ducks we usually went to the Calumet River and the Calumet Lake, now the site of a larger and much handsomer city than Chicago was in 1840. I made a collection of fowl from that river, and it contained four

species of geese and twenty of ducks, besides a swan and a pelican—all killed by myself and friends. We used no blinds or decoys, but paddled our own canoes, and the old muzzle-loaders would bring a bag of from twenty to fifty ducks in a day to each gun. I brought with me, from Boston, a female pup of the short-haired Newfoundland breed, which I imported from St. Johns, and a remarkable retriever she proved to be. The first time I took her out, though she had never heard a gun fired, when I killed a duck, and it fell into the river, Fan brought it out as handsomely as an old dog could have retrieved it. After that, no wounded ducks could escape her, she swam so fast and dived so deep; but she sometimes failed to distinguish between wild and tame fowls, and always wanted to bring me the ducks and geese belonging to the Irish folks along the river.

In the woods and groves, ruffed grouse were to be found abundantly. I have seen a bag of at least thirty of them brought by two sportsmen from the Des Plaines timber, the result of one day's sport, which is more than we could ever get in my youth in New England.

In the winter came deer-hunting, and the whole country was full of them. A party of four or five hunters would, in a two days' hunt, get ten or fifteen deer. About 1842, I remember a circular drive, where 100 men or more, and a mixed pack of dogs, surrounded Blue Island, and drove probably fifty deer into town as far as Thirtieth Street. Most of them, however, broke through the ring and escaped; perhaps six or eight were killed. One winter's day I was out on the prairie south of the town, in a sleigh, with a friend who drove a pair of thorough-bred sorrels; along came a buck, pursued by a brace of deer-hounds then in use, powerful and fleet dogs, a cross between the English greyhound and the bull-dog. My friend put his horses on the run, and we kept up with the

chase for a mile or so; but the snow was deep, and the deer outran both dogs and horses. These hounds were also used to chase prairie wolves, which were plentiful, and one of them could kill a wolf without help. Another time, I was out on the prairie with my brother, in a sleigh, when a deer came in sight.

My brother unharnessed his horse, put on a saddle, took a gun, and started in pursuit, leaving me on the boundless prairie. He returned in half an hour, having killed the buck, which we picked up. We had a mare so well trained that we could shoot off of her back, or leave her on the prairie while we went to shoot, and she would follow us about, grazing as she went.

About thirty miles north of Chicago is the town of Lake Forest, with a large population of wealthy Chicago men. This, in 1840, was a region of heavily wooded ravines, where deer were abundant. The only white inhabitant was an old hunter by the name of Clark—"Indian Clark," he was called, to distinguish him from others of the same name. He lived in a log cabin, and subsisted on the proceeds of the chase. The deer he called his cattle, and would call on any brother who was fond of deer-hunting, when he came to town, with this invitation: "Doctor, my cattle are getting fat; won't you come out and kill a few?" which suggestion was seldom refused.

My first deer-hunt was, as I remember, with J. E. M——, in the wooded country west of Fox River. We were driving through a grove in McHenry County, and were descending into a little valley, when up sprang a dozen deer from the long grass all around us. My companion, always ready, quickly raised his rifle, and brought down a fine buck; but I was so much astonished at the unaccustomed sight, that I forgot my gun, and sat gazing at the retreating herd. We marked where they

went into the timber, half a mile away, and as a wagon and ox-team came along, M—— engaged the driver to follow the deer, which are not afraid of oxen. We left our wagon, and I got into the other one, which was driven slowly toward the deer, M ——, in the meantime, making a circuit through the woods, and hiding beyond the deer. They kept out of range of my shot-gun, feeding along until they got within 100 yards of the ambushed hunter, who got two of them in range, and killed them both with one bullet. This was all the meat we wanted. A deer's carcass could then be bought for $1.50—hide and all.

I have always been more fond of fishing than of shooting, and in 1840 the fish in the Illinois waters were as abundant as game on the land. From the lake piers we could catch perch, pike, lake trout, black and white bass, cat-fish, and sometimes a muskallonge. At that time the Chicago River water was pure enough to drink, and pike, black bass, rock bass, cat-fish, and dog-fish could be taken in either branch of the river, above the forks. In the Calumet River, all these species were to be found in great numbers, so that 100 pounds a day were often taken with the rod. Big gar-fish and muskallonge were there also. I saw one of the latter, which was six feet long, and weighed eighty pounds, taken in a seine at the river's mouth. In the Fox River, and the lakes in the northern part of the State, all these fish were plentiful, as also in the Rock River. I caught black bass with the fly in those waters fifty years ago. It is claimed that the spoon is rather a modern device for catching fish, but I used them on the lakes as long ago as 1842, and I think they were, in a simple form, brought from Norway by the immigrants.

In the fall of 1840, I went, in company with Doctor T——, to the new Territory of Iowa. We traveled in a light wagon, with two horses, taking a change of clothing,

our guns, and a pointer dog. We went by way of Aurora, on Fox River, and Dixon, on Rock River, and struck the Mississippi at Savannah. The distance, by the way we went, was about 200 miles, and we did it in about five days, the roads being good at the time. The country between Chicago and the great river had few settlers, and we drove over the prairies many hours at a time without seeing a house or a human being. Early travelers were always impressed with the likeness of these immense grassy plains dotted with groves, to the ocean with its islands the horizon extending to the sky-line, and the surface of tall grass waving in the wind like the gentle ripple of the summer sea. Like the ocean, the prairie was then pathless, and we steered due west, like an ocean steamer bound across the Atlantic to America. Game was abundant; every creek and slough had its ducks; the prairie fowl ran along the roadside, and the deer bounded through the thickets. The Doctor killed birds enough every day to feed us, and we had them cooked at the log cabins at the roadside where we stopped.

We reached Savannah toward noon on the fifth day. There was a ferry, but the ferryman was absent, and his cabin was closed, and there was no other habitation in sight. We waited some time, and then the Doctor entered the cabin through the window, and opened the door. We were hungry, and looking for something to eat, found a pot with a venison stew, and some corn-bread, of which we began to eat, when suddenly the door opened, and a tall, muscular figure, with a blackened face, entered—a formidable fellow, who seemed able to throw the intruders into the river. Although he must have been surprised to see his property in the hands of strangers, he showed it not, but accosted us with civility, and when we hastened to apologize for our freedom, he made us welcome,

showing a natural politeness which was very pleasant. He was a charcoal-burner as well as ferryman, which accounted for the blackness of his countenance. The ferry-boat being on the other bank, he took us across in a dug-out. The river being high, with a heavy current, and about a mile wide, the passage seemed rather perilous. He called an assistant, and went over with the flat-boat for our wagon and horses.

We were in Jackson County, Iowa, which territory was settled only about thirty miles west of the river, and that sparsely. We found shelter in a log cabin that night, and in the morning we went west to look for the claim of two Chicago men, who had gone there a year before, and who had invited us to visit them. At noon, we stopped at the cabin of an old patriarch lately arrived from Illinois, with wife, sons, daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren—a dozen or more -not one of them with a shoe or a hat, and with nothing in the house to eat except boiled corn and venison; but they all seemed happy and contented, and gave us of what they had. The old man was one of the pioneers; he had moved first from Ohio to Illinois, and when that State became too thickly settled to suit him, he came to Iowa. While we were there, one of the daughters had a fit, and Doctor T——, with his pocket-knife, opened a vein and relieved her.

From the cabin of this philosopher of the wilderness, we traveled a few hours, until we found our friends' place, which was also a lodge in a vast wilderness. There we staid two days while our friends were organizing a hunting-party. This was hard on the lady of the house, who had to do the house-work, servants not being obtainable.

On the third day we started—our hosts, two neighbors, the Doctor, and myself—in two wagons, with camp equi-

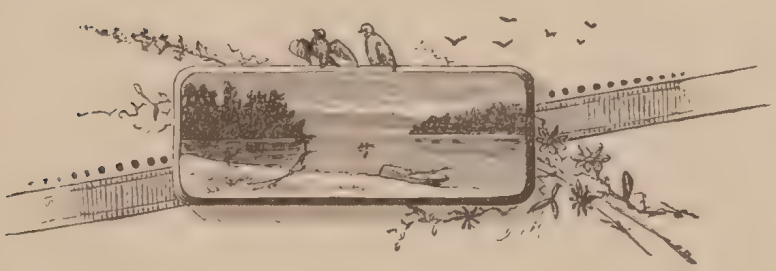
page, guns, and dogs. We traveled through a wild country to a region seventy-five miles west of the river, known as the "neutral ground," lying between the land of the Sacs and the Foxes and the white settlements; in this territory the Indians did not hunt, and it was therefore supposed that game would be plentiful. Here we encamped, near the head-waters of the Wapsipinicon, for a week, but did not find game as plentiful as we expected; six deer and an elk were killed, but no turkeys. Wolves were numerous, and howled about our camp at night, making it hideous; and one of the party, returning to camp after dark, was followed by a pack of the big timber wolves, who seemed eager to make him their meat.

We had heard that the Sac and Fox Indians, who had been expelled from Illinois a few years before, were unfriendly to the whites, and had robbed and ill-treated some hunters whom they had found hunting on their grounds. One day, when I was left alone in camp, two well-mounted and armed Indians rode up and dismounted. Our dog fled to me, howling with fear, and I felt similar sensations; but I had always been told by the pioneers that you must never let an Indian know that you fear him, so I pretended unconcern, and went on with my cooking, and when they entered the tent I greeted them in a friendly way, as if I was expecting them to dinner. They were big fellows, but did not seem unfriendly; asked first for whisky, by signs, speaking no English, and by signs I told them I had none. I asked them to eat some venison stew, which they did with an appetite, doing justice to my cookery. While they were eating, I made up my mind that, if attacked, I would shoot one of them with a pocket pistol which I had ready to use. In the tent stood a double-barreled gun, on which they had their eyes, and one inquired (still

by signs) how many were in our party, and where they were. I held up both hands to signify ten, and pointed to the woods. Then one of them moved toward the gun as if to take it, but I stepped before him and shook my head. Then they laughed, shook hands with me, mounted their horses, and rode away, greatly to my relief.

Next day we broke camp and returned home, the Iowa men thinking these Indians were spies, and that they might return with a large party and drive us away.

Traveling over the prairies of Iowa, we often met with scattered skulls and bones of the buffalo, which could not have long disappeared from that region; and on a high bluff on the Rock River, in Illinois, the remains of a chief of the Sacs was still to be seen in a tree-top, wrapped in his blanket, after the manner of sepulture used by those Indians.



FIELD ETIQUETTE.

By F. E. Pond ("Will Wildwood"),

Author of "Memoirs of Eminent Sportsmen," "The Greenwood Club," Etc.

THE ethics of field sports must be regarded, to some extent, as an unwritten code, recognized and appreciated by perhaps a majority of those who use the gun for recreation, yet strictly put in practice by only a minority of the vast legions claiming fellowship in the fraternity. Multitudes of men become to a degree proficient in the use of the gun, either for glory or gain, but the true knight of the trigger possesses chivalry and courtesy, an inherent and ever-abiding love of fair play, and his code of ethics may be considered the promptings of his nature, not an acquired formula to be put on with his shooting-suit, and laid aside as readily.

Field etiquette, in short, may be defined as the spirit of courtesy that springs into action spontaneously, as the outcome of kindred tastes—the genial, generous feeling of fraternity and good-fellowship. The genuine sportsman, like the poet, is born, not made. Wealth and rank and education will give greater opportunities for the indulgence of a natural taste for field sports, but neither of these, nor all combined, can impart the essential qualities we have briefly outlined. The unlettered woodsman, skilled in nothing except the gentle science of woodcraft, may show finer perceptions of the ethics of field sports

than the wealthy sportsman who has grown cold and callous in pursuit of the almighty dollar. That doughty old highland chieftain, Roderick Dhu, in entertaining his royal adversary, Fitz James, evinced the true spirit of courtesy when

> "He gave him of his highland cheer,
> The hardened flesh of mountain deer."

Considering the time and circumstance and surroundings, the rude feast thus provided was a truer test of hospitality than many a banquet of rarest viands.

Inasmuch as the ethics of sportsmanship can not be practically learned from books, or even imparted by precept, it would be useless to attempt to lay down the rules that should govern the shooter's conduct when afield. The task, at best, so far as it could be theoretically performed, would require the tact of a Chesterfield, with more space at command than can be accorded in a single chapter. In lieu, therefore, of a set formula, it will be safer to touch upon a few of the negative qualities often unconsciously developed, or, at least, exercised without restraint.

In the field with genial companions—and no others need be considered—one should lay aside the selfishness associated with business life, and assume the nobler attributes of his nature. Let him lock the spirit of avarice in his office safe, within the deepest receptacle, and if he can forget the combination to reach and resurrect it, so much the better. At all events, let him show as little of avarice and as much of kindliness as possible. He whose greed can not be held in check, should be content to take solitary rambles with dog and gun. Possibly the bountiful character of Dame Nature may subdue his selfishness, open his heart and hand, and teach him the true philosophy of out-door recreation—its social and moral requirements.

Until this lesson has been thoroughly learned, his society will not be eagerly sought, and he may remain aloof from select parties of sporting tourists with full confidence that he never will be missed. That gifted writer and well-known authority, "Gloan," touches upon some of the principal points under consideration in his admirable work, "The Breech-loader," thus: "To evince disregard—even the slightest—for the possible safety of others, is something more than a mere solecism in manners. Therefore, no man should infringe the rules of the field as to carrying his gun, or as to pointing it or shooting it in the direction of another. The caps of a muzzle-loader should always be removed upon entering a dwelling, riding in a conveyance, and whenever not actually in the field; and more than that, the fulminating powder should be carefully brushed from the nipple. The cartridge of the gun should always be taken out of the gun on such occasions. Abandon any shooter who refuses to do either!

"To give a younger or less successful man the choice and majority of shots in a day, should be the rule of courtesy; for even between experienced and equal shots, sometimes the luck will all run to one gun, and no shift in position or change of locality will alter it. Generosity then becomes a duty."

"The field is the touchstone of the man. A gentleman—he who claims the title by his even nature, his thoughtfulness for friends and others, his self-respect, and, when necessary, self-sacrifice, his forbearance, his politeness, in deed as well as word—will find the opportunities greater to show his qualities brighter in the field than in the parlor.

"To the man of business cares and toils, the field should be an occasion of self-improvement as well as relaxation. While he is in the world of strife, making his race for wealth and fame and power, he may excuse

to himself his selfish habits upon worldy reasons. He may button up the nobler impulses of his nature in his breeches pocket. He may grasp whatever gain his business brings, and call it thrift. But when in the field, let him put away his grosser self and resume his better attributes. Let him be joyous in the health and liberty it brings; let his joyousness make him a coveted companion, an amiable friend, a truer man, bringing sunshine and gladness to those about him, inducing them to emulate his example and imitate his virtues."

"Veteran! remember the days when you were young. Not always were you the dead shot which you now are. It was not in a day or a year that you learned all of that lore of the chase and matured that judgment of which you are now so proud. Not without many a timely hint and friendly word, did you accumulate those stratagems and resources which render you now so successful and expert. This young man hangs upon your every word. Be his friend indeed. If you are his instructor, do not be his tyrant. His nerves may be weak, his actions awkward, his sight uncertain, and his bag unfilled. Kindness and encouragement may bring him out, but, be sure of it, that derision never will."

"Be not a miser with the treasures of your experience. Give them freely to him and to all. Reflect that when, at last, you lay down your gun to be taken up again in this world no more forever, you will leave behind you spirits as buoyant and sportsmen as ardent as ever were before. It is not enough that from the great fund of your field-wealth you shall dole out parsimonious scraps as your legacy to sport. Spread it broadcast and generously. Give, and give so gladly and humanly that it shall be in reality and literally with you, more blessed to give than to receive."

Very little need be added to the foregoing well-chosen

words of field philosophy from the pen of one of the brightest and best sporting authors of our time. Every lover of out-door recreation can call to mind the diverse characteristics of associates or companions frequently met with in the shooting-field. The two extremes may be compared to positive and negative forces—the one type attracting and the other repelling.

Who has not come in contact with the would-be oracle —the pariah of camp and field? This specimen of the *genus homo* is nothing if not autocratic. He impresses upon those around him the vast extent of his forest lore, his skill, and varied experience as a mighty Nimrod, and assumes the air of a dictator or the patronizing tone of a superior being. He may vary it with a sarcastic remark concerning the arms or appliances of his associates, their lack of judgment, etc., and setting forth his dictum as to the proper gauge of guns, utterly unconscious of or oblivious to the fact that he is himself a perfect bore.

Then there is the doleful individual, grumbling continually over ill-luck in the field, bad weather, and the petty annoyances of camp life, which should be taken in cheerful spirit by all devotees of out-door sports. The chronic fault-finder will magnify a shower into a deluge of misfortune, and an empty game-bag, or even two or three "unaccountable misses," will furnish material for a woful tale, too often spiced with exclamations more forcible than elegant, until the luckless shooter spoils the serenity and general good-will of his companions. Such a man is almost invariably one to shirk all responsibilities in camp, throwing the entire burden upon his comrades, and devoting his attention to finding fault with the elements and all animated nature.

From these characters—gunners, perhaps, but not sportsmen—it is a relief to turn to the devotee of field sports who has ever a kind word and a helping hand, a

cheerful nature to dispel the gloom of the darkest day, and an encouraging tone to cheer up the less fortunate companions. He may not be a Crœsus or tower of strength on 'change, in fact he may be but a modest figure in business circles, but in his sphere he is, nevertheless, a jolly good fellow, in the best sense of that much-abused term, and as such will fill a warm corner in the hearts and memories of his companions. Long life to him and his kindred, and may good luck and good comradeship fall to the share of all who have at heart the inborn spirit of field etiquette.

PRAIRIE CHICKENS—PINNATED GROUSE.

By William Bruce Leffingwell,

Author of "Wild Fowl Shooting."

THROUGHOUT the Western States, where waving fields of corn and golden yellow grain mark in checkered squares the variegated landscape, where oceans of prairie grass, rippling streams, placid ponds, and tiny forests abound, there is the home of the prairie chicken; 'tis there they live, breed, and rear their young. There are no other birds that have caused youthful hearts to bound in such exciting rapidity as these. The village youth knows them well, for their love-calls, in the spring-time, when the grass peeps out through the brown earth, and the glad sunshine is nursing into animated life all vegetable matter, float in early morn o'er the dewy fields and into the open window of the house, where, lying in bed, prone to sleep, yet knowing he should arise, the yawning boy hearkens, and the musical "boo-woo-woo" reaches his listening ears, while, in imagination, he sees his serenader promenading the green sward, surrounded by his attentive consorts, naively admiring the lofty manner of their lordly spouse, who treads with proud disdain the grass, while, with wings curved down scraping the ground, tail erect, in fan-like shape, he bows his neck and struts about as if he knew the admiration he was causing. A speckled beauty he is, in his mottled dress, and as he fills his sacs with air, the tan skin swells

at the sides of his neck until, like huge globes, it stands out; the feathers are erect, or stick straight from his swollen neck; then he quickly stoops, and running a few yards with agile steps, emits through his partly closed bill the confined air, and there bubbles forth, in a melodious note, a soft "boo-woo-woo," until, by frequent repetitions, the highlands and the lowlands are filled with this mellow peal of morning welcome. Welcome music is this in the spring-time, for it brings to us the news of approaching sport with these same birds, when their young are strong of flight and vie with their parents in size.

There is a marked similarity between the male and the female pinnated grouse, and among the young the sex can not be distinguished; but when advancing age has overtaken them, the bald neck of orange-yellow is a sure indication that the possessor is of the sterner sex. The colors of the birds are, one might say, but two dark brown and a grayish white; these colors wind around their bodies in graceful wavy lines, and present a handsome appearance. Their forms are elegant in proportion, and the full-grown pinnated grouse weighs about two and a half pounds, at times as high as three pounds. They are found in all the Western States bordering the Mississippi or Missouri slopes. They frequent the grain-fields, the corn-fields, and, most of all, they love the broad prairies, where oceans of waving grass roll and heave in apparently endless space.

When spring-time comes, and Nature asserts herself, they seek these spots to build their nests, to lay their eggs, and to rear their young. In selecting a spot for this, their home, they seek the grassy edges, rank with the outgrowth of weeds, bordering some grain-field, the corn-fields, along creeks, beside ponds, or a sunny slope in the heart of the broad prairie, where the parent bird

can sit in quiet contentment, full of confidence in the security of her home; for her eyes behold the face of the land for miles and miles, and instinct as well as experience teach her that the unbroken prairie, not yet opened

PINNATED GROUSE.—Tympanuchus Americanus.

by the husbandman's plow, is the most likely spot in which to incubate and rear her little brood free from intrusion and danger. She therefore chooses a place on the prairie and builds her nest, selecting for its construction

blades of grass, weeds, and small twigs; her eggs are laid, the number ranging from eight to twenty, and she patiently sits on her nest day after day, hatching her expected brood. The eggs are about the size of those of the bantam hen, and very similar in appearance, except that the eggs of the prairie chicken are yellowish white.

The young birds are hatched in May or June, depending on the season. If the weather is bright, dry, and warm, the bird begins her domestic duties early, and brings forth into the world her tiny brood; if the season is cold and rainy, she delays the days of her motherhood until the season is further advanced. The process of incubation is the same as that of the domestic fowl. Before the birds are hatched, the eggs are liable to be destroyed in many ways—by hawks, owls, skunks, and foxes; thus by actual spoliation of the eggs, or by the destruction of the old bird, the expected brood is wiped out of existence. Many and many a bird is slain on her nest by prowling birds and beasts; but the greater causes of destruction of prairie chickens, before they are hatched, are cold spring rains and prairie fires. Frequently, eggs are laid along the edges of creeks—lazy, indolent creeks, that flow sluggishly within their confined banks until the spring rains o'erfill them, when they rush along, sweeping with wide arms over the valleys and bottom-lands, carrying devastation in their course. The water drives the birds from her nest, chills the eggs, and then all is lost; the bird deserts her nest. Worse still than this are the prairie fires, started by the farmer to burn the dried grass from his unfenced field, either to prepare for his plowing or to protect his crops and buildings. He starts with lighted wisp in hand, and burns an area sufficient to guard his property. Slowly, at first, the tiny flame flickers and sparkles, encouraged by the breath or fanned by the hat of the incendiary; then it shoots up

in doubtful blaze, and seems to die out in its beginning. Fresh dry hay is tenderly placed on the feeble flames, and soon, along the defined line, as marked with the plow, the crackling blaze speeds forward, the faint blue smoke ascends in drifting clouds toward the dome of heaven; increasing its volume and speed, the hesitating flames wave along, getting higher and stronger as the rank dry grass is thrust into its yawning maw, and, like a red demon, it engulfs all in its path. Feeble at first, it now advances with the confident rush of successful hosts, its hot breath withering and scorching to death all within its reach; the trembling flames have overcome their hesitancy, and wave and roll in huge billows of seething fire, while flickering yellow tongues flash and strive to reach the very sky. Now the whole earth is a living fire, while the pure air is contaminated with the blackening smoke, and beneath its reddened edges, whirled up by the strong draught of the advancing fire, blades of corn-stalks spin in eddying flights, and fall again in spiral quiverings into the seething bed. Up from their prairie homes the birds rise in dire alarm, and with shrieks and cries circle in air, and with pinioned wings and accelerated flight seek a place of safety. The prairie chicken in her hidden nest scents the tainted air; then, peering through the bladed grass, she sees the leaden smoke ascending to the blue sky; soon the crackling flames and the hot air frighten her, and seem to rob her of her breath. Closer she hugs the parching ground; in dire alarm she looks around, and then, with frightened cluck, springs from her bed, and, with bristling feathers, runs threateningly toward the advancing flame, which smokes and roars, mocking at her feebleness. Disheartened, she runs again to her sacred nest, and nestling closer with her protecting wings, shielding her all, closes her eyes to perish with her charge; but the stifling smoke suffocates her, and with-

out thought she instinctively springs upward, her wings scorched by her cruel enemy, and soon breathes again the pure air of the open field. A grand sight is a prairie fire, but woe be unto man or quadruped who is caught unaware in its relentless path; for, urged by a strong wind, a wind that increases in strength and volume, in its flight the speediest animal soon submits, and the blackened path, the sooty ground, the sickening odor of burning flesh, sadly tells the story of life and death.

If driven from her nest, the prairie chicken builds again in some other place her destroyed home, and produces another brood.

The mother bird is thoughtful and solicitous for the welfare of her little ones, and, in her anxiety to protect and shield them from harm, will resort to various subterfuges. Counterfeiting a broken wing, she will run before her human enemy, then fly a short distance, seeming all the while in dire distress, merely to divert attention from her brood, while they, dear little things, sometimes not larger than a sparrow, will quietly and quickly run away, each one for itself, and seem to disappear by magical illusion, for we look where we saw them last, but can not find them. Still, I have often caught them. The power of flight is given them at an early age, and when the old ones arise, with a loud whir, these little ones fly up, their diminutive bodies looking about as large as a half-grown quail, scatter at once, and after a short flight, drop softly into the prairie grass, where, remaining concealed, they await the expected call, the anticipated cluck of their solicitous mother.

How long prairie chickens can survive without water, is an undecided question; certain am I that the period is beyond one's expectations. It is true they are frequently found in the rank grass and weeds of prairie ponds, and along the thick growth of furze at the edges of creeks,

adjacent to stubble-fields, but in time of drought they do not seem to change their habitation, for in the early morning, when the dew is on the meadow, and the leaflets are freshened with its pearly drops, the birds wander through these elysian fields, and archly pick them from the glistening blades of grass. At such times, refreshed with the water they find in their cooling retreats, they are prepared for the day's siege of heat. I have often seen them drinking in creeks and at the edges of marshy ponds, but they are an upland bird, and while they must have water for sustenance, the same as all animated life, yet they require little of it, and that not frequently.

The male grouse is a polygamous old rooster, and his vanity is equal to his handsome appearance. In the spring-time, when the hens gather together in flocks, and mildly associate together, the lordly old chaps strut around, their air-sacs filled with wind, their minds with conceit, and they try in different methods to attract the attention of the gentler sex, that they may entice one more into their harem. Early in the morning, their flowing "boo-woo-woo" is wafted over the awakening fields, and these old cocks promenade up and down, longing for some ambitious rival to throw down the gage of battle and meet him in fierce contest. They don't have to wait long, for soon one equal in valor runs toward the booming bird; they eye one another with fierce hate; then, as if to tell the other birds of the many victories he has won, the bird who first held the citadel swells out in conscious pride, and his orange-colored neck expands until it seems as if the sacs would burst, and running quickly along, he emits a "boo-woo-woo," prolonging the last note until its echoes, wafted on the morning wind, can be heard for miles, when it dies out in sweet, mournful cadence. The new arrival goes through the same performance—utters the same cries; then they warily

approach each other, watching to discover some weak point of attack, then dash together with great violence, their feathers upright or reversed, and they advance and retreat, their fighting being similar to that of tame roosters, until at last one is defeated, and runs away crestfallen, while the victor marches over with majestic mien to the coterie of admiring hens, who accept him as their lord and master.

While the spring-time is one of so much moment to the hens, and they build their nests preparatory to hatching out their young, these old roosters are either too proud or lazy to work; possibly they think the females are born to work, like the Indian who said: "Buck no like work; squaw do all work. Buck get tired; squaw no get tired. If squaw get tired, squaw die; then Buck get young squaw, who no get tired, but do heap work." The cock grouse do not help build the nest, neither do they aid in hatching or rearing the young; but while the hens are performing these maternal pleasures and duties, these old roosters wander around, leading a lonesome life, in groups or flocks, quarreling and fighting; about the only good thing that can be said of them at this time is, that they stay home nights. The food of the prairie chicken consists of seeds, beans, peas, grasshoppers, insects, and all kinds of grain. While they are found in great abundance in the prairie States, throughout the fields of prairie grass, yet they like best the partially settled lands, for there they find food in plenty and of great variety. When they are young, they are especially fond of grasshoppers, which they are expert in catching. They grow rapidly, the strength of their bodies seemingly exceeding that of their wings, for they soon tire of flight when young, and fly but a short distance. About August 1st they are two-thirds grown, and are the easiest bird to hit that flies; they will then lie well to the dogs, dislike

to use their wings, and to avoid discovery trust, instead, to their skill in hiding. When, at last, they feel the hot breath of the pointer or setter, and see his staring eyes, they spring up with a loud whir but a few paces from the shooter, and become an easy victim to his aim. Early in the season, they are so easy to approach that it is nothing unusual to wipe out the whole covey; for, after rising, they will settle in the grass or rank, weedy stubble, spring up singly, and then the hunter bags them all. They do not fear civilization; on the contrary, rather enjoy it. They are hardy birds, and survive our severest winters. Were they protected, they would nest and rear their young in the grass and grain-fields within sight and hearing of our smaller cities. Their roosting-places in the summer-time are in the grass and stubble-fields, and in the winter, when the wind blows bleak and raw, and the drifting snow fills all the crevices of the field, they go into the corn-fields or the heavy grass, or roost in the trees at the edges of some sheltered grove. I have often seen them in trees in winter, and at such a time it is impossible to bag them, except an occasional one with a rifle, for they are exceedingly watchful, and can not be approached near enough to shoot with a shot-gun. As they are accustomed to see farmers pass along with wagons or sleighs, the sight of such conveyances does not alarm them, and if the hunter is with such a rig, he can at times obtain shots; but these old birds are extremely wary, and a successful shot is more the result of accident than the evidence of skill. Prairie chickens must be hunted with a dog; no other method can prove successful. The dog employed must possess three requisites—speed, staunchness, and endurance. The breed of dogs combining these qualities to the greatest extent is the one most to be desired, and in selecting a dog for this special branch of sport, one must not allow his love of

beauty, or his admiration of well-known sterling qualities in a certain breed of dogs, to influence his choice. To me, the most beautiful dog that ever skimmed the field is the setter, English, Irish, or Gordon, as the case may be; there is a dash and vim to be seen in the actions of these dogs that causes my heart to beat with delight. In the autumnal September days, I have so often seen them skirt the plain after pinnated grouse, or silently and grandly working among the bogs and fences for that grayish imp, jacksnipe, which, like a flash, streaks the dead-brown grass in his eccentric flight, only to be quickly brought down by a shot from our guns, while there dies in its white throat that enervating "scaipe, scaipe."

In the russet woodland, the drumming ruffed grouse lives among his kind, and thrills us through and through with startled expectancy when he springs from behind the old decayed log, and darts through the thickly branched trees. After long years, still fresh and green is the memory of the summer-time in the dear old island, where my early love, the saucy woodcock, made his home among the alders, willows, and brakes; of the placid pond with its silvery sheen, the trembling leaves of the aspen, the delicate, sensuous perfume of the pond lilies, and before me, in grand rigidity, my companion, my protector, my faithful Felo, in his glossy silken coat, pointing out this nocturnal bird; the whistling cock just about to dart from the nearest tree, the deep report, the drifting feathers, and then, at my feet, with deep-brown eyes looking with undying love into mine, my faithful setter handing me our bird, and the golden bars of sunlight, symbolic of the brightness of my young life, streaming down through the quivering leaves. And then a few months later, in the golden autumn, in October, when the grass was brown and sere, crisp with the brilliant coating of frost, and the purple wild grapes vied in

beauty with the maple-leaves and the changing color of the sumac, how often have Felo and I stood together in the cold, bleak marsh, when the leaden clouds skurried athwart the skies, and the north wind swerved within gunshot for us, the noble mallard, the plunging red-head, the swishing blue-bill, or the dainty teal; Felo then, his sparkling eyes first sighting the game, would beam on me in mute appeal, fearing lest I might not see the incoming birds; or, perhaps, startled by that well-known cry, the grating "me-amph," I would glance o'er head and see a young drake climbing in air, his red feet extended, his neck curved, glorious to my youthful eyes in all his gorgeous dress of velvet-green, chestnut, and white. Sweet are the recollections of those childhood days, those days of blessed memory! When the threads of time in their silvery strands streak our hair, those early days return to us with realistic vividness, and in dreamy retrospection we live again our Heaven on earth.

Now, when for hunting prairie chickens I advocate the use of a dog other than the setter, let not the lover of that breed say I am prejudiced, do not know them, or do not like them, for I *do know them* and like them. Aye! a noble race of dogs are they, to the hunter's heart the noblest of them all, and when, in the selection of a dog for prairie chicken hunting, I choose the pointer, it is not that I forget the good qualities of the setter, but because the setter can not stand the heat of our August sun as can the pointer. I have owned them both, hunted them side by side, season after season, and am speaking not unadvisedly, but after the results of years of practical experience. I shall not treat of the way in which a dog should be trained to hunt prairie chickens, for other gentlemen, in this book, have written of the manner of breaking them for other upland game birds, and the dog that is thoroughly broken to hunt quail, woodcock, ruffed

grouse, and snipe will, with a trifling experience, become proficient in the pursuit of prairie chickens. The three requisites heretofore mentioned—speed, staunchness, and endurance—are the golden virtues which, when possessed by and found in a dog, make him perfect for this branch of sport. There is no sport where greater freedom can and must be allowed the dog than this.

On our Western prairies, the range is, one might say, unlimited; there are places where for miles and miles the soil is unbroken and unfenced, and where the wild grass grows in thickest profusion, the monotony of the waving fields being broken here and there by the brown stubbles of grain or the yellow corn-fields; the territory is apparently endless, for the eye follows the grass until the blue sky seems to sink down and meet it, while the drifting white clouds float on its very tips. In such a place as this, the hunters drive along in their wagons, getting out to shoot when the birds are found. Away speed the dogs, the young with impetuous bounds, the older ones with that long, swinging lope which tells us of the reserved strength, to be tested in a few hours, when to the piercing rays of the summer sun all the inhabitants of the parched earth must succumb. The dogs should be worked by hand, for the length and breadth of their range preclude the thought of directing them by voice. With heads high in air and tails beating their sturdy sides, they go ahead, then cross and recross, beating back and forth in their several journeys, covering every point that seems favorable for hiding the secreted birds; then, in the midst of their rapid run, a faint scent is wafted to them in delicate indistinctness, but it suffices for their experienced nose, and, quick as thought, the bounding machines of life are checked and transformed to motionless figures as rigid as steel. And now is the time to test their staunchness, for the hunters are perhaps a quarter, perhaps half

a mile away, urging their horses forward on a smart trot through the noiseless grass; but the dog pays no attention to them; like a carved image he stands, his eyes staring into the apparently deserted grass, his ears bent a little forward, as if hoping to hear what he smells, but can not see; his left fore foot raised, its ball pressing against his heart as if to stop its excited throbbing; his tail standing parallel with his body, his legs braced, lest some power from behind may thrust him forward and break the charm which is the delight of his life. Back of him, a little at one side, perhaps fifty yards, his companion comes toward him as if borne on the wings of the wind; he hears nothing, smells nothing, but suddenly his bright eye sees the entranced form of his comrade, and he, too, is transformed into a living monument, and having supreme confidence in the ability of his companion to know what lies concealed in the brown grass, he stands staunchly, awaiting developments. The hunters have arrived, birds are flushed; "crack!" "crack!" rings out on the still air, and the charm is broken for the dogs, to be renewed time and again throughout the day.

In the selection of a gun for the purpose of shooting prairie chickens, care must be taken to choose such a one as will best fulfill all the requirements for which it is intended. At the present day, the gauges used are from twenty to ten bore, but the standard gauges, that is, the ones mostly used, are twelve and ten. These sizes are used because they meet the demands for all kinds of game, as well as trap-shooting. Early in the season, the shooting of prairie chickens is not difficult; on the contrary, it is extremely easy to bring them down, as they are large to shoot at, rise within easy gunshot, and the half or two-thirds youngsters are not tenacious of life, and succumb to light blows or a few pellets of shot. In shooting them at this time, one can not congratulate himself that he has

exhibited any degree of skill, while he has cause for humiliation and chagrin should he make many misses. Unless the fields are open and unfenced, hunting prairie chickens is attended with much fatigue, for it is necessary to tramp for hours, following the dogs, and at a time when the sun is high in the heavens and beating strongly down; under such circumstances, one must remember that the weight of the gun adds to or detracts from the pleasure of the hunt. In those early summer days when the law has thrown aside its protecting shield, and the hunter is filled with ambition to go afield, he should be fitted in his accoutrements, clothing and gun, so as to derive the greatest enjoyment from his outing. The gun should be light of weight, not weighing more than eight pounds, twelve-bore, the first barrel a modified choke, the second full choke.

It isn't really necessary to have a gun shoot so close as full choke, but the birds rapidly grow stronger, rise farther from the shooter, and it requires a hard-hitting gun to bring them to bag. Early in the season, No. 8 shot is the best size; as the months advance, 7's, then 6's, this latter size, in late fall, being none too large. There is no especial skill required to shoot the birds in early season. They are apt to frustrate the beginner, for they fly up with a loud whir, that will rattle the tyro, and cause him to fire hastily, and perhaps score a miss. They do not fly fast at this time, but when they spring up each bird starts out for itself, and if one is fortunate enough to bag two or more with one barrel it is the result of accident. The proper way is to select your bird, no matter how many get up; pay no attention to the majority until you have first fired at the one selected. Don't be in a hurry, and fire with hasty or ill-judged aim, but bring your gun up coolly; hold just over the bird's body if it is going straight away. Don't dwell on your aim, but when

you think you are right, steadily pull the trigger, and the bird will be yours. Don't wait and watch to see the effect of your shot, but quickly draw on another, and let drive at it; if it is a quartering bird, be very careful or you will shoot behind it, and you will be apt to do this if the bird is over twenty-five yards from you. When you see you have a quarterer, draw in behind it, cover it, then pull in ahead from one to three feet, depending on the distance it is from you. When a bird jumps up almost in your face, be very careful or it will get away from you, for it will be so close then that, if you shoot, your shot will not have a chance to scatter, while if you hit, the bird will be torn to pieces; the better way is, let the bird go over your head, wheel as it passes you, then fire just under it, and a trifle ahead of its bill, and it will come down. The flight of the prairie chicken is exceedingly graceful, similar to that of the quail and others of the grouse family. Their wing-motion is made with the greatest rapidity; this gives them propelling force. After getting this motion, they stiffen their wings, and sail, sometimes 100 yards, as true as an arrow, and without the least preceptible motion. At this time, they present a pretty appearance, for they are held up by their slightly curved wings, while one forgets for the time the power that forced them to this great speed. Such is their manner of flight, and is kept up until they alight. While their flight going with the wind is very swift (in a strong wind at a rate of perhaps 100 miles an hour), I have often noticed them flying along at the side of a passenger train, and would estimate their average speed to be from thirty-five to forty-five miles an hour. When the season for shooting prairie chickens has arrived, throughout the vicinity where they are to be found the excitement is intense, and each hunter has some favorite place where he intends to be located at the break of day, early enough to be

ahead of any accidental comer; his gun has had an extra cleaning, his traps have been gathered together, and his dog has been carefully watched and faithfully guarded, lest he be missing on this eventful morning. Long before sunrise, the hunters quietly drive to the neighboring fields, and when the first faint light shows the approaching day, they are in the stubble-fields, fresh in their dewy smell of hay and clover. Soon it is light enough to see to shoot, and the morning air bears to their ears the faint boom of guns from the moist valley they are in. How sweet the morn, when the air is fresh and pure, and fragrant smells the field! although the days are dry and hot, and under the midday sun the earth gasps for refreshment to moisten its parched bosom. In this early morning hour, the hunter's trail leaves behind it a dark-green path, while their limbs are wet with the heavy dew. How grandly the dogs work on this summer's morn! 'Tis their gala day, the beginning of many happy ones for them, for in this sport they are never left at home. The fresh, cool air, the moist stubble, fill the spirit of the dogs with rivalry, and they race forward at break-neck speed, until checked by the stern command of their master. Soon the birds are found, and an old cock rises just far enough away to tempt the beginner. Cunning old chap, he hasn't forgotten his experience of the previous year. Don't shoot at him; let him go, for the young brood must be within close gunshot. "Whir! whir!" and each hunter bags his bird. No time for talking now, for shells are hastily slipped in, and before the gun is closed other birds are in air; quickly slamming it together, a double is made; the birds are gathered, the stray ones who feared to fly are pointed almost at the hunter's feet, and they, too, are flushed and bagged. At such a time as this, my dog has often pointed them in little bunches of weeds in the heart of the stubble-fields, and I have seen

PRAIRIE CHICKEN SHOOTING.

the speckled beauties lie there, with heads drawn down onto their bodies, only to be perceived by the glitter of their eyes, and have shoved my foot under them, lifting them from the ground, and it has oftener happened that, urged by my voice, the dog has sprung on them and caught them, in the tangled grass or weeds, before they could take flight. In the early morning, the birds should always be sought for in the stubble-fields, for there they go to roost at night, and begin their feeding at break of day. If undisturbed, they feed in the stubble until 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning, then go to the corn-fields, tall grass, or heavy weeds, and remain until late in the afternoon, say about 5 o'clock, when they return again to the stubble. In the stubble-field, where the soil is light and flaky, the birds often scratch and make a spot just large enough for them to wallow in, and here they dust and shake themselves in the same manner as tame chickens; they frequently dust in the middle of the road, and at times are seen crossing in advance of an approaching team, when they run into the rank weeds or grass. On cool, cloudy days, they often remain in the stubble-fields through the entire day. In their going to and fro, they do not resort to flight, as a general thing; indeed, seldom do, but feed their way along, enjoying the fallen grain, and catching insects, especially grasshoppers. The experienced hunter knows these peculiarities, and profits by them, and an old chicken-dog has learned the same things, and when a stubble-field is reached, if late in the morning or late in the afternoon, the dog will work its edges, if leading to a slough or corn-field, for he knows the birds have wandered to those retreats, and he can quickest find them by striking their trail, which he is apt to do at the places bordering the field. As the birds are in the tall slough grass or the rank corn-fields in the middle of the day, and the dog will soon tire himself out in the grass, while

it is practically impossible to obtain shots in the standing corn, the hunter should be patient, and not attempt to hunt them then, but go to some shady place, provide his dog with cooling water, and patiently wait till evening; then he will be refreshed and rested, while his dog will be as fresh as in the morning, and filled with new life.

When evening is approaching, then is the time when the hunter revels in this exciting sport; for the birds leave the grass and corn, and travel back to the stubble-fields, where they go to roost, and lie better for the dog at this than any other time. At such times as these, the hunter shoots at them until dark, then regrets that daylight "didn't last just a little longer."

My dear old friend, Mr. Isaac McLellan, who is now eighty-three years of age, on my writing him that in this book I would treat the subject "Prairie Chickens," said that many years ago he had visited the prairies of the Great West, and had participated in many pleasant hunts after prairie chickens, and he promised to write me a poem descriptive of this fascinating sport. He kindly did so, and wrote for me the following beautiful lines, so realistically descriptive of the habits of the birds and the season when they are hunted. To one who has breathed the pure air of our Western prairies in the glorious autumn-time, these lines will recall most pleasant memories of days delightfully spent in pursuit of pinnated grouse:

Now autumn is flushed with tarnished gold,
The woodlands shine with prismy dyes,
The oak-trees flutter their yellow leaves,
Resplendent clouds sail thro' the skies;
The leaf of the elm shows dusky brown,
The maples with scarlet bonnets blaze,
The withered grass, over prairie plain,
Shines thin and crisp in these autumn days.

The drooping willows that shade the stream
  Shower down to earth their fading leaves;
The golden wheat is garnered in,
  Corn-fields are strewn with folded sheaves;
The blue wild pigeons circle in air,
  The plaintive wood-doves mourn in shades,
The quail-flocks whistle in coverts dense,
  The partridge flutters in bosky glades,
The upland plovers utter shrill cry
As they whirl on glancing pinions by.

But the noblest bird that haunts the plain,
  That hides in grasses its speckled brood,
That sweeps over fields of ripen'd grain,
  That skirts the borders of brook and wood,
Is the prairie chicken, pinnated grouse—
  Breasting on storming wings the air,
Defying bravely the fowler's aim,
  The prowling fox, the poacher's snare.

When hot mid-summer heats prevail,
  To restful shades their broods they lead,
To refuges at corn-field edge,
  Where the wild grasses drop the seed;
But best they love the prairie space,
  Where measureless leagues of land extend,
Far from the harmful homes of men,
  An unfenced pasture without end.
And when the wheat-blades ripen rich,
  Lavishing treasures to the ground,
The grouse-flocks muster to the feast,
  And 'mid the juicy stacks are found.

At night, amid the sumptuous fields
  Secure, they range the corn-field space,
Sharing a banquet rich and rare,
  The feasts luxuriant of the place;
But when the dusky clouds of dawn
  Are touched and gilded by the light,
On clashing pinions they arise,
  And o'er the prairies speed their flight;
There all day long, 'mid sheltering grass,
  They find a shelter and repose,
Alarm'd at times by slaughtering guns,
  The deadly havoc of their foes.

The middle of September the birds are full-grown, strong of wing and body, and are beginning to gather together in packs or flocks; at this time it is hard to distinguish the old from the young birds. This is the season of the year when they afford the most exciting sport, for the birds are large and strong, and in every way worthy of pursuit, and the hunter feels that his work must be careful, his sight quick, his aim sure, and his powder strong, for the grouse are wary and tenacious of life, and will carry off many pellets of shot. As the mornings are cool, the birds pass more time in the stubble-fields, and on cloudy days spend the entire day there. At this time, the wheat and small grain that have fallen from the sheaves have sprouted, and, intermingling with clover and short weeds, make an excellent cover, where the birds can feed without danger of being seen, and yet can see suspicious danger approaching from any quarter; their flight at this time is long, and when flushed they arise in a whirring body, and fly from a half to a full mile before alighting, when they usually drop into the immense corn-fields. These corn-fields are their resorts in times of danger, for after they once alight in these protecting places, they run so fast that they will keep far ahead of the pursuing hunters and their dogs, whom they hear coming, rattling the dried leaves of the stalks, or occasionally running against them, which serves a notice to quit on the alert birds. It takes a wise dog to circumvent the birds in these corn-fields, but I have had great sport shooting them with a dog that was up to all their tricks. Of all the dogs that I ever shot over, he was the only one I ever saw that could get the best of the birds in the corn-field, and it was rarely that, on warm, bright days in the late months of November and December, this cunning old fellow would not outwit the birds. He seemed to know that extreme cautiousness must be

exercised in the corn-fields, and while in the stubble his tail waved from side to side, as an invitation for us to follow him. When he entered the corn fields, so brittle from sun and frost, he knew that an incautious movement might spoil all, and he would trot stealthily between the rows, with head held high to catch the faintest scent, his tail drooping and immovable, for he knew that his swinging tail would rattle the stalks and frighten the birds. Dear old boy, how I remember his actions, his looks, his caution! and how quietly he glided through the fields, never touching the fallen stalks, but stepping over them, and trotting around a fallen or tangled bunch. At times, he would be out of sight; but no fear of him. I have known him strike a trail of the birds, follow them, then return to us after having been long hidden from our view, then start out again, and come to the staunchest point at a bird one would suppose within thirty feet of us; this was only a ruse on his part to attract our attention, to warn us to be on the lookout, for I never saw him make a *bona fide* point in the late corn-field. After having warned us, he would carefully and cautiously lead us, at times hundreds of yards, through the fields, then stop, and almost crawl on his belly to us. It was wonderful the human wisdom he possessed, but lacked the power of speech to tell; when he got to us, he would look into our faces, as much as to say, "It's all right; I've got them located." Then he would go back of us, perhaps thirty yards, and making a wide detour, get the birds between him and us; at this time, his great wisdom showed itself, for he knew that the birds would run from any noise, and if closely pressed, fly. After he had gotten beyond the birds, knowing they would run or fly toward us, he would rush toward them, running against the stalks, and the racket he made flushed the birds, and we always got quartering shots; at times, the birds flew

almost in our faces. The owner of this dog and myself shot eighteen one December day over him in the corn-field, and I never knew a dog, except him, with whom, under similar circumstances, we could have bagged a single bird. The dog is still living, in good health, so I am told, and I will go many miles to see him, to look into his honest face and stroke his broad brown head.

On warm October days, the grouse are often found sunning themselves along the edges of the stubble, where the ground is sloping, and where they get the benefit of the sun's warm rays and are protected from the wind at the same time; at such times, they lie well, and good shots can be obtained at them. One of the most delightful days I ever spent afield was in the month of December, after pinnated grouse; the night before, it had snowed about four inches, but the morning dawned clear, with the air keen and cold. It was in the western part of Iowa; the land was unfenced, and we drove wherever we pleased. The birds had left the corn-fields, and were found sitting on hay-cocks and hay-stacks that were scattered all through these upland meadows. A dog was of no use, because the birds were on their high pedestals, and could sight any approaching object. We were in a farmer's bob-sled, with the seat well back, while the driver sat in the bottom of the sleigh, far forward. On sighting the birds, the driver would jog his sturdy old horses along, while my partner and self sat, with heavy ten-gauge guns, ready to hurl No. 6's at the birds at our first opportunity. Being familiar with the sight of farmers' teams passing by, the birds were not so timid of them, provided the team kept at a respectable distance. It would not do to drive directly toward the birds, so we made a circuit, or semi-circle, gradually working toward them, and striving to get within forty or fifty yards of them, and on their springing up we would get in both

barrels as soon as possible. It took quick shooting and a hard-hitting gun to bag those veterans; we killed none inside of forty yards, while most of them dropped nearer sixty. During that day we bagged twenty-eight, and they were the handsomest lot of grouse I ever saw, each one being of unusual growth and of fully three pounds weight.

Our English cousins, who have never experienced the delights of pinnated grouse shooting, and who know of these birds as they are in the summer months, at a time when their young lives are as tender as those of the feeblest of birds, think that the bagging of them lacks the spirit of sport found in hunting the heath cock of their own country. To such my earnest desire is, that the fair breeze of fortune will bring the white wings of some vessel to our land, and that these gentlemen will be aboard, and in the golden autumn, when the frost has touched with gilded fingers the meadows and the uplands, clothing all Nature in her winter garments, that they may partake of the indescribable pleasure of trying their skill at our full-grown, vigilant grouse in a November stubble or corn field, and they will say, as others have said, that there is no upland bird harder to bag, and more thoroughly appreciated, than the pinnated grouse of our land, when killed on an October or November day.

The thought has often been brought to many, whether or not these birds migrate. Yes, they do; not, however, in the manner of migrating wild fowl, but they work slowly southward in large flocks, apparently not with the intention of avoiding cold weather, for they don't seem to mind the cold, but most of them seem to desire to spend the winter in places other than where reared. This we know, for all through the winter months we find large flocks where we had hunted during the fall and found no birds. We notice them in driving across the country, and especially when riding on the trains; they are a beautiful

sight, standing up so alertly a couple of hundred yards from the track, their mottled feathers blending prettily with the ground, covered with the spotless white of the soft snow. At such times, the novice wishes he was out, and had his gun; foolish boy, he could not get anywhere near gunshot to them, for at this time they are the wildest. As their line of flight is about the height of the telegraph wires, many birds are killed by flying against them, and the sharp eyes of the section-men along the railroad are always on the watch for the ever-welcome chicken. At the season of the year when the snow is deep and food is hard to obtain, the farmer's boy exhibits his cunning, and with his trap baited with corn catches the birds, and at home he marches in, throwing down his feathered prizes, when for a time salt pork and bacon are relegated to the cellar, and the family feast on prairie chickens. The laws are very stringent against the trapping of pinnated grouse, but the farmer seems to think that the law of the land has no effect on *his* land, so far as *he* or his family are concerned; in other words, that he has the right at all times to capture, as he sees fit, sufficient of the birds for the use and benefit of himself and family. This impression is entirely erroneous, for the prairie chickens are regarded in the eyes of the law as *ferœ naturœ*—that is, animals of a wild nature, belonging to no one, but being under the protection of the law as provided by statute; and the farmer has no more right to kill or capture these birds in the close season than has the veriest stranger. The fact that they breed on his land makes no difference; they are not his until he has them in his *actual possession;* even then, they are only his so long as he retains possession of them; let them escape, and they become again animals *ferœ naturœ*, and remain so unless they have *animus revertendi* (the intention of returning), which no member of the grouse family ever

had after having once been captured and then regained its liberty. The law, while protecting game birds in the close season, as against every individual, is as generous in the open season, when it says: "All mankind has, by the original grant of the Creator, the right to pursue and take any fowl or insect of the air, any fish or inhabitant of the water, and any beast or reptile of the field, and this natural right still continues in every individual, unless when it is restrained by the civil laws of the country." Sportsmen, at times, feel bitter at farmers because they will not allow hunting on their premises; but if sportsmen would only consider the damage farmers sustain, at times, by reason of the carelessness of hunters and hoodlum boys, they would not blame them for making an iron-clad rule refusing all persons the privilege of shooting in their fields.

I have seen thoughtless hunters trample down grain, grass, buckwheat, leave open gates and bars, break down fences, and allow their dogs to chase sheep and run after cattle, while the hunters themselves shot indiscriminately where cattle were feeding. It isn't necessary for a sportsman to show his breeding in the drawing-room alone, for the true sportsman will be as much a gentleman in the field, with the waving fields of grain around him and the blue sky overhead, as witnesses, as if he were in the midst of the most brilliant gathering and under the surveillance of the most critical eyes.

The game of our country is being surely exterminated, and unless we desire the death of the goose which is laying for us the golden egg, the most rigid observance must be made of the enforcement of our game laws. It was but a few years ago that our plains were black with grazing buffaloes; to-day, the bison is a thing of the past —butchered in cold blood by thoughtless and heartless men, who forgot the element of sport that is inherent in

the character of man, and sunk themselves into human ghouls, who reveled in animal blood for the sake of a few dollars, killing, killing, ever killing, and allowing the carcasses to lie and rot on the plains, or serve as food for the howling wolves or the scavenger crows and buzzards. Then the wild pigeon—that beautiful bird that used to darken the setting sun with myriad flocks, while the russet of the male and the blue of the female seemed to make the sky alive in variegated shades of colors; they, too, are gone, exterminated from the face of the earth, not for sport, but for gain, the death of each bird telling its destroyer that he had made a few pennies, or that one more drop had fallen to quench his thirst for the blood of these innocents. Because the buffaloes and the pigeons have been exterminated, it doesn't follow that the prairie chicken must necessarily go the same way; on the contrary, not only can they be saved, but they can be multiplied; but this can be done only by moderation and strict observance of existing laws. I appeal now to the heart of every true sportsman, the most generous class of men on earth, to practice moderation in your shooting; do not, when you are in the midst of a covey of birds, kill for the sake of killing, or to see how many you can bag; you know what you are going to do with them, what friends you wish to remember. In other words, within your mind is fixed the number of your friends who will appreciate the birds. When you have gotten your number, you have a *quantum sufficit;* then stop. I have witnessed too much of this trying to make big scores in shooting prairie chickens, and have seen them in heaps at the roadside, rotting in the August sun, because they could not be shipped, and the parties shooting them knew at the time of shooting that, of necessity, the birds must spoil. Shame! shame! on the man who will do this. Many hunters will go out in advance of the open

season, a day, perhaps two days, just enough to be first into the young broods; these men know they are violating the law, and in their guilty hearts there lurks but one fear, and that fear is, that they may be apprehended and fined. The sanctity, the purity of the law, that they as good citizens should uphold, is willfully violated, and to cover their shameful acts, they hide their guns and dogs in their wagons and sneak out before daybreak, and return after dark; if seen coming in by some friend, and asked where they have been, they reply in a nonchalant manner: "Been after snipe." To say they do this because others do, is to present a childish excuse, devoid of reason, for no sane man can knowingly violate a law and be excused. The maxim *Ignorantia legis neminem excusat* (ignorance of the law excuses no one) is as old as the hills, and its principles will never change. We can only attribute this willful violation of the game laws to extreme selfishness, and no man with the heart of the true sportsman throbbing in his breast will do it. For a number of years the time for shooting prairie chickens commenced August 1st; this was entirely too early. A step in the right direction was taken when the law, in Iowa, was changed to August 15th, but a beneficent advancement was still further made when the law was passed making the open season to begin the 1st of September. September 1st! That is a glorious time to commence to shoot these birds, for they are full-grown, worthy of pursuit, and are kings and queens of the prairies. At this time I would rather bag a half-dozen than to get three times as many early in the season. The Legislature of Illinois has passed a law prohibiting the shooting of prairie chickens for the period of two years. This law went into effect in 1887. At the time of its passage, it met with the most violent opposition on the part of many sportsmen, for they felt it to be an unwar-

ranted restriction on a sport they had always looked forward to with interest, and had enjoyed. On the plea that other States allowed the killing of these birds within certain seasons, also saying that their dogs would become useless, that others would not observe the law, they sought to hinder its passage; but the law was passed, went into effect, is generally observed, and to-day there are more prairie chickens within the boundary of the State of Illinois than there has been for years. Thus the sportsmen were deceived in the effect of this law, for the great ills they thought would happen by temporarily depriving them of the pursuit of birds was only imaginary, and the actual truth of the goodness of this wise law showed itself in the ultimate result—the great increase of the birds.

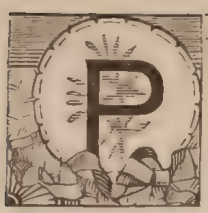
Other States can follow the example of Illinois with profit. We are all inclined to be a little selfish when our ancient and long-established rights are threatened with interference, and we dislike having any laws go into effect that may in anywise preclude us from the enjoyment of field sports. The greatest good to the many, should be our motto. Can we not be generous, and help to increase rather than diminish these birds? Temporarily we may be deprived of pleasures afield, but the increase of birds will reward us, and our growing children and their descendants will thank us for our forethought in years to come. Unless we take wise and manly steps toward the preservation and protection of game, the time is not distant when game pictures, taxidermized specimens, word paintings of birds, will be the only sources from which our descendants can obtain information of birds that will be extinct, but which at this time we find fairly plenty. At times during the past few weeks, I have noticed one of my boys, a youth of twelve, intently studying the pages of my shooting papers and sporting

magazines. When I cautiously peeped over his shoulders, I always found him looking at the cuts of guns. Of late, he has asked me many questions concerning their mechanism, the proper weight, bore, how to hold on moving objects, etc., etc. I knew the latent fire that was raging within him, for my boyhood days seemed just passed, and vivid is my recollection of the time of my longing for a gun — my first gun. I was not surprised, therefore, when last night he, with boyish enthusiasm, recounted to his mother and me the successful shots he had made during the day with his spring-gun; the sparrows he had killed, the tin cans he had hit when thrown up by his companions. Finally he came to me when I was writing, and gently threw his arm around me, looking tenderly into my eyes with his deep-blue ones, while in timid voice he said: "Papa, how old were you when *your* papa bought you your first gun?" And then his voice grew stronger, and he continued with earnestness, "I would rather have a gun than any other thing in this world." When you are fourteen, my son, said I, then I will - "Why, my boy," exclaimed his mother, "when you are large enough to go into the fields and hunt, the birds will all be gone— killed off." The growing scarcity of game was so apparent to her, that she made this remark. She was not interested in the preservation of game, except so far as to feel an interest in what she knew was of moment or interest to me. There was solemn truth in what she said, and unless we, whose place it is to obey the law and to pass laws which in our wisdom and experience we know to be for the protection and preservation of game, do our duty, we are unfit to be classified as sportsmen, and should hide our heads in shame, bury ourselves in our several places of business, try to forget our early lives, the days we spent with Nature in the forests, at the hillsides, by the gurgling brooks, on the silvery streams, on

the rolling prairies, in the pursuit of fin and feather; forget all these ever living and recurring memories, and through our selfishness fail to leave our children the delights to be found in the field, which the poorest of us have the power to leave them—as *our* legacy, as *their* inheritance.

THE WILD GOOSE.

By C. R. Tinan ("Nanit").



ERHAPS no game bird on the American Continent is so generally known, and which, in one sense, sportsmen are so little familiar with, as the wild goose. By term "wild goose" I refer to all of the different varieties of the goose family, including the brant. Covering almost every portion of the United States in their migratory flight to the frozen North in the early spring, and to the sunny South with the first signs of cold weather, the "honk! honk! honk!" of the Canada goose, and the peculiar cries of the other varieties, are recognized by everyone; but rearing their young in the wilderness of the British Possessions, or in the icy fastnesses of the Arctic regions, has made their habits during their breeding season but little known, and the small area of the United States which they frequent during their migratory flights, leaves the great body of sportsmen practically unacquainted with the methods adapted to the successful pursuit of them.

In a work of this kind—especially in a chapter necessarily limited in its length—it is even quite impossible to enter into a scientific ornithological treatment of the wild goose, even were the writer competent to do so. The naturalist or ornithological student would not be enlightened further than what has already been written, and the average reader would be more wearied than entertained. It is my purpose to skip as lightly as possible over that

portion of the subject, and, in imagination, take the reader with me, properly equipped for the sport, out onto the low, broad plains of Southern Texas, some pleasant winter day, or, better yet, into the golden stubble-fields of Nebraska or Dakota, where goose-shooting is to-day seen at its best; but a chapter on the wild goose without a partial description of the general appearance of the bird it treats of, would be incomplete at its best. It would be like a well-known Shakespearean drama with the principal character left out.

The wild goose family contains not less than a dozen different varieties. When the many different names applied to the same species is taken into consideration, one is inclined to believe—the novice especially—that there must be ten times one dozen; but of the different varieties, not over six or seven are well defined. In one of the best known works on wild fowl shooting, only two varieties are mentioned, the Canada goose and the white-fronted goose, two of the best known to Western sportsmen in an early day. In a more recent and better work, the author refers to four varieties—the Canada, snow-goose, brant or brent goose, and the white-fronted. These four varieties comprise about all that are commonly met with in the West, of which the last named is nowadays but seldom seen.

To attempt to so accurately describe the different varieties of geese and brant that the novice would instantly recognize them when seen, seems a hopeless task, so mixed is the nomenclature of the goose family. It is a clear case of making confusion worse confounded. As a well-known writer on wild fowl truly says, "The nomenclature of goose family will put in doubt and mystify the wild fowl hunter greatly, for they receive their names in the West, not scientifically and historically, but locally." The same author then cites as an illustration

the fact that what are called "Hutchins" geese in Nebraska are precisely like the Canadas, only smaller. Incidentally, I believe that the variety referred to is rightly named in Nebraska. I once thought to the contrary, that the Hutchins geese were but the unmatured Canadas, but a subsequent study of the birds has altered the early-formed opinion. In Dakota, many local sportsmen call the Hutchins geese "Mexican" geese or "Texan" geese. Everything else is a "brant," except the Canadas, which they call "old honkers," and the snow-geese. The white-fronted geese they term "speckled brant."

The following semi-ornithological descriptions and the local names of the respective varieties of the goose family will perhaps give the average sportsman as nearly a perfect idea of the appearance of the birds as will be found. For the ornithological descriptions I am indebted to Gordon Trumbull's late work, "Names and Portraits of Birds."

Brant (*Branta bernicla*)—(brent-goose—brent—brand-goose—common brant—black brant). Head and bill, with neck all around, and extreme fore part of body, black; on either side of neck a group of white scratches. The back, with front wings, brown; the feathers paler at the ends; remainder of wings, black, or nearly so, as is the tail, the latter, however, being almost concealed by a covering of white feathers, technically called "coverts." Under parts of plumage, grayish brown, the ends of the feathers touched with white, this producing transverse bars; legs, blackish; length, about twenty-four inches; extent, forty-six to forty-eight inches; weight, about five pounds.

Of the breeding-habits of the black brant but little is known. They rear their young far into the frozen North, and their domestic life may forever remain a mystery.

When in captivity they show no disposition to breed, and seemingly never become reconciled to the unnatural restraint. Their food consists almost wholly of vegetation, but they readily subsist upon grains when in captivity. They are much more common on the sea-coast than in the interior, and are rarely met with in the West.

Snow-goose (white brant—wavey—fish-brant—Texas goose—blue goose—blue snow-goose—white-headed goose—bald brant). The true snow-goose is white, with end of wing black; fore parts of plumage frequently stained with reddish brown, this generally more noticeable on front of head; bill, light purplish red, but variable from a dusky tone to flesh-color, with black recess along its sides; legs, deep purplish red, though variable. In the young, the upper parts are bluish gray or lead-color, more or less varied with white; end of wing as in adult; bill and legs, dusky.

Two varieties are recognized by ornithologists, viz.: lesser snow-goose and greater snow-goose. The smaller bird measures twenty-five inches in length and about fifty-two inches in extent; the larger, which has just been described, measures several inches larger. The two varieties grade toward one another confusingly. The names snow-goose, fish-brant, and white brant are locally applied to the larger variety, and the names blue goose, bald brant, blue snow-goose, etc., to the smaller kind. The smaller variety is the same shape and form as the larger kind, and has the appearance of being arrayed in the undeveloped plumage of the true snow-goose. The head and neck of the lesser snow-goose is white, with the remaining plumage principally grayish brown, with more or less bluish gray, the feathers ending paler; wings, plain, light bluish gray, with their flight-feathers black, or nearly so; rump, light gray, or more whitish; legs and bill, like the larger kind.

This latter variety is not common in the West, at least not in those States and Territories most frequented by the geese and brant. Their larger cousins—the true snow-geese—are, however, found in countless numbers all over the prairie States, and are common to all the country between the Missouri River and the Pacific Coast. In Dakota, they arrive at about the same time as the other varieties, and are always found associated with the Canadas. The Pacific Slope is a favorite winter home of these birds, and large numbers are killed. The shooting, in years past, has been equally as good in Dakota and along the Platte River, in Nebraska, during the fall. Of their breeding-habits but little is known. Like the black brant and other varieties, they nest in the far North.

White-fronted goose (laughing goose—harlequin brant—pied brant—prairie brant—speckled belly—speckled brant—yellow-legged goose—gray brant). Upper parts, principally grayish brown, the broad ends of the feathers narrowly edged with brownish white, the pale edgings turned to pure white on tail and certain feathers of the wings; the head and upper neck of closer mixture, or nearly plain brown; extreme front of head, next to bill, white, this white intensified by the brown just back of it, which is of a deeper tint, or blackish; breast, in a high state of plumage, blackish brown, broken only by a few pale or white edgings to the feathers, but, as more often seen, a blotchy mixture of black and white; the feathers of rump, and those beneath the tail, pure white; color of bill, varying with different specimens, from flesh-color and yellowish to darker and more reddish tint; the nail at end, white, or nearly so; legs and feet, orange, the webs lighter, and the claws white. Length, twenty-seven inches; extent, sixty inches; weight, six pounds.

The white-fronted goose, called "brant" or "speckled belly" by nearly all Western sportsmen, is rarely

ever found east of the Mississippi River, and, in these days, is by no means common in Nebraska, Dakota, or other Western States. During the first few years of settlement of these States, they were very abundant, but for the past few years seem to have surrendered the territory to their cousins—the Canadas and the snow-geese. They generally arrive from the North early in September, a few weeks in advance of the Canadas and Hutchins, and leave for the South as much earlier. They breed north of the 60th parallel, in the wooded districts, and are found in great numbers in Alaska during the summer. Their favorite winter home is Mexico and the Pacific Slope.

Canada goose (common wild goose—big gray goose—honker). Head, neck, bill, and legs, black; patch about throat, and feathers above and below tail, white; upper parts of plumage, principally brown, this fading into light gray beneath; brown of rump and tail, darker, or blackish. Length, thirty-six to forty inches; weight, ten to eighteen pounds.

Hutchins goose (lesser Canada goose—small gray goose—prairie goose—little wild goose). A small variety of the common wild goose, and in appearance, excepting size, like it in all respects. Length, about twenty-seven inches; extent, forty-eight inches; weight, seven to ten pounds.

I have grouped the description of these two birds together, in that they are both known as the Canada or common wild goose; but while the true Canada goose is common to all parts of the United States, the Hutchins goose is only found west of the Mississippi, I believe, and throughout Dakota and Nebraska is more often met with than the larger variety. The Hutchins goose breeds in the Arctic regions, while the Canadas breed in isolated lakes and streams throughout portions of the United

States, though, as a matter of fact, the great body of them breed in the British Possessions. In all other respects, the habits of the two varieties are identical. Years ago, the Canadas bred in considerable numbers on the northern tributaries of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, but the rapid settlement of the country has driven them farther north, except in rare instances, so that it is safe to say that, in these days, no variety of the goose family breeds within the boundaries of the United States.

The common wild goose is easily reared in captivity, but never becomes thoroughly domesticated. Unless their wings are clipped, they will at the first opportunity join some passing flock. They cross readily with domestic geese, and the flesh of the cross-bred bird is the superior of either the wild or native. When three years old, in captivity, they lay from three to five eggs, and gradually increase the number as they grow older. In their wild state, they frequently nest in trees.

The Canadas are the last of the geese or brant to come down from the North in the fall, and the first to arrive from the South in the spring, often coming before the ponds, lakes, and rivers are open sufficiently to wet their feet.

The Canada goose lives to a great age—100 years, it is said. I believe it. I have eaten them—or tried to. A yound wild goose—Canada, Hutchins, white-fronted, or snow-goose, or brant—is delicious eating, however, when properly baked; but the trouble of it is, sometimes, a novice can not distinguish an old bird from a young one, and when it comes to picking out a young goose from a mixed lot of Canadas and Hutchins, it becomes a most difficult task, one is so liable to select an old Hutchins goose for a young Canada.

Standing on a bluff of old Lake Erie, thirty-five miles east of Cleveland, one cold March morning way back in

the '70s, I brought down an old gander, who was leading his flock out for a midday drink in the lake, which I have every reason to believe was piloting his fellows across the country in Washington's time. If I remember rightly, he weighed eighteen pounds, and an all-day's par-boiling in a wash-boiler and a half-day's roasting in a hot oven was not sufficent to get him in shape to set before company. Tough? Well, he was tough enough to have gotten up and walked out of the room with the invited guests. Since that bit of cuisine experience, I have made it a rule, when superintending the preparation of a goose of uncertain age for the table, to place a robust and healthy brick in the roasting-pan. When the brick is easily pierced with a fork, it is safe to test your guests on the goose.

The receipt for cooking a hare, "first catch your hare," well applies to the wild goose. Now that I have enabled the novice to readily distinguish any variety of the goose family brought to bag, it is fit that he should be instructed how to "catch his goose."

Space will not allow, nor is it necessary to go into details over the different methods pursued in the capture of each of the different varieties. It is safe to say that nine out of every ten readers of this work will, if they ever go upon a goose-hunting trip, encounter the Canadas or Hutchins almost exclusively, and as all that may be said of them and their habits applies to all the other varieties, except as noted further on, I shall confine myself almost wholly to them; but before coming to that, a few hints about hunting some of the other varieties may be instructive to the amateur and interesting to the old and experienced hunter.

"Silly as a goose" is a saying familiar to all, but it is not, perhaps, until one has hunted them in their wild state that the saying is given even a passing thought, and

but one opinion then prevails, that the author would have qualified his expression had he been familiar with his subject, for a keener, wilder, and a more difficult bird to bring to bag does not exist. The manner of hunting them depends somewhat on the variety at hand, and more particularly upon the country and the season of the year.

The sportsman who starts in search of a fortnight's shooting at geese nowadays would, in almost all probability, make Dakota or Nebraska his objective point, and the fall of the year the time. The varieties he would encounter in those States would be mostly the Hutchins, Canadas, white geese, and a sprinkling of the white-fronted geese. The white geese are seldom made a sole object of pursuit by Western sportsmen. Unlike the Canadas, they do not decoy readily; and although always found associating with the Canada and Hutchins geese, are more uncertain in their habits, and those I have shot have been brought to bag more by some fortunate circumstance than any particular skill on my part. They are strikingly handsome birds when flocked in large numbers, and I know of nothing that will delight a sportsman's eyes more than a sight at 1,000 or more of them sitting upon some prairie knoll that has been burned over and blackened, or when they are circling over some stubble-field on a bright, sunny afternoon.

One early morning, some five years ago, I lay in a stubble-field located about two miles west of White Lake, Aurora County, S. Dak., waiting the expected arrival of the Canada geese for breakfast. Around me were clustered a dozen profile Canada geese decoys and one lone white goose decoy—the latter a sample from the manufacturers. As the sun rose above the low eastern bank of the lake, a long, glistening white line arose from the lake and bore down in my direction. On they came

direct to the field, but instead of swinging into my decoys, as expected, made one or two circles at a safe distance, and, with that irregular, snipe-like pitch peculiar to them, dropped down in the corner of the stubble, 150 yards away. Presently there came another flock, and with much the same maneuvering they joined their fellows. Had I had a little more experience with geese, I would have at once arisen from my blind and frightened them away, for as decoys they held over my insignificant dozen most disastrously to me. While mentally trying to decide how I would get a shot at the snowy mass of birds at the end of the field, flock after flock came in and joined the first arrivals, until it seemed to me that every white goose in the West was sitting there before my eyes, and, for all the execution I could do among them, they might as well have been on top of the Rocky Mountains. From where I lay, there appeared to be 1,000,000 of them—there were probably close to 1,000 of them—and the sight they made in the bright morning sun will never be forgotten. I tried to crawl within shooting distance, but the first move started them, and my two loads of No. 1's sped harmlessly after them.

My experience is, that the white-fronted goose, or "speckled belly," as they are termed in the West, is the wildest variety in the family. Unless found in abundance, the hunter will have unsatisfactory sport hunting them exclusively. They decoy as readily—if the term "readily" may be used—to Canada geese decoys as to those of their own kind. The fact of the matter is, they are very hard birds to decoy. They seem to be of an unsociable nature, and pass over or by one's decoys —may be to alight less than 200 yards away—with the most provoking indifference. Their feeding-habits are identically the same as the Canadas. When their roosting-places and feeding-grounds lie near together, they fly

low, and, if abundant in numbers, good shooting may be had by locating upon an elevated piece of ground in line with their flight. If convenient, it is a good plan to set out decoys. They may not draw them in, but they serve to disarm suspicion. When the hunter is located in a stubble-field, with decoys set out, these birds have a provoking habit of bearing down on the field with the speed of an express train, seemingly bound straight for the decoys, but when just out of shooting distance, sheer off, and alight but a short distance away. When up to such tricks, carefully note from which direction most of them come, and then locate yourself 100 yards away from your decoys in that direction. This will bring them between you and the decoys, and give you many good opportunities, if you are properly concealed and arise to shoot at just the right moment. When using Canada geese decoys, and they act in this manner, the novice is apt to believe that if he but had decoys after their own kind, they would come in readily. Well, they wouldn't do anything of the kind.

The sportsman who yearns for goose-shooting will never experience its delights and pleasures to the utmost until he encounters the Canadas and the Hutchins. While almost as wary, keen, and wild as any bird that flies, they decoy readily under favorable circumstances, and the sport is simply magnificent.

As previously stated, it is probably in Dakota that goose-shooting is to-day seen at its best, though by no means as good as was to be had a few years ago. During the years of 1880–85, the goose-shooting in Dakota was grand almost beyond belief. The very few cultivated fields of grain at that time—particularly during the earlier years mentioned—served to attract the great body of birds then in the country during their southern migrations, and a visit to any one of them, during an afternoon

or morning flight, was all that was necessary to secure splendid shooting. Decoys were not then necessary, and a blind or other artificial place of concealment by no means indispensable. You could fairly "knock 'em down with clubs," so plentiful they were, and so little hunted. They were a terror and a source of annoyance to farmers, picking out the seed-grain in the spring, and making a ten-acre field of corn, in the fall, look as though visited by a hail-storm. It was no uncommon occurrence for the geese to completely ruin a field of corn in from two to three days' time, leaving so little that it was not worth gathering. Even nowadays, an isolated piece of corn, left uncut and not shocked, is apt to fare badly at their hands—or bills, rather.

My first experience with wild geese in Dakota was in the fall of 1883, the locality the same as that in which I had my morning's experience with the white geese. A fellow sportsman—whom I will call Tom and myself had been told by a farmer acquaintance that large numbers of geese came into his wheat-stubble every afternoon—"thousands of 'em," he said. The next afternoon found us in the immediate vicinity about 2.30 o'clock. We knew the field by a fresh stack of straw on its edge; then, too, we knew the place because there was no other stubble for several miles around. The spot was an elevated piece of prairie, in full view of White Lake—a great resort for ducks and geese and a more likely place for the sport could hardly be conceived. The day, too, was a grand one—one of those perfect October days, rarely seen in greater loveliness and more thoroughly enjoyed than upon the broad, sweeping prairies of Dakota. The air was heavily impregnated with that pure, invigorating, life-giving ozone for which Dakota is so justly famous, and a better day for the anticipated sport could not well have been chosen.

It is such days as these—in Dakota, the rule rather than the exception all through the autumn—that gives to goose-shooting there one of its chiefest charms. Despite the inevitable disappointment that often comes in the pursuit of these wary, uncertain birds, there is, nevertheless, that absence of excessive fatigue more or less encountered in the hunting of almost ony other game bird. It is a decided contrast to the suffocating heat and eternal mosquito-fighting one must endure in search of the long-billed woodcock; or the climbing, exhausting work after that noble bird, the ruffed grouse; or the blinding, burning heat of an August day on prairie chickens; or the wearisome tramp, tramp, after the zig-zag snipe –which always is flying "zag" when your shot goes "zig;" or the briers and thorns and tiresome march to secure the little brown Bob Whites; or the cold, wet, mud and general discomforts of duck-shooting. It is so great a contrast to all these, that goose-shooting, when the game is fairly plentiful, may be termed a deliciously lazy sport, but one which, while it does not exhaust the physical being, tires the mind and tests the nerve as few things can. In some respects, it is like standing on a deer-drive. The birds come to you; you do not go to them. But when they do come, aye, there's the rub. To lay in some large stubble-field on one of these lovely October days, with just enough breeze sweeping across the prairies to render the air fragrant and bracing, gives to one who is a lover of Nature an indescribable sense of pleasure that nothing can take away. It matters little whether he has a feather to show for his afternoon's outing, he has enjoyed himself, and that thoroughly, and his evening meal and night's rest is the sweeter therefor. While this is true of all field sports to a certain extent, yet the pure air and bright sun of the Dakota prairies on an autumn day gives to the hunter a certain

animation and buoyancy of spirits, and a peculiar sense of enjoyment, found in but few places.

To the east, two miles away, White Lake lay in the gently sloping valley, shining like a massive sheet of silver. As we busily unloaded our trappings, guns, shell-boxes, etc., the sharp eyes of my companion, ever on the alert with true hunter's instinct, espied a low black line—once seen, never afterward mistaken—rise slowly over the lake. With a warning exclamation, he grabbed gun and shell-box, and started on a dead run for the field, leaving me to secure the horse, and come on after as best I could. As he passed the straw-pile, he hurriedly gathered up an armful of straw, and then made another start for the center of the stubble as fast as his legs could carry him, looking back over his shoulder every rod or two to see how near the geese were, for they were coming directly toward the field. Meanwhile, I was not asleep, but before I could get ready to leave the buggy in fighting order, the geese had gotten so near that I saw it was useless to attempt to get into the stubble in advance of them; but I managed, by a brisk run, to reach the straw-stack, in hopes that they would swing over that and give me a shot, in which I was not disappointed. On they came, about fifty of them—Hutchins geese—flying nearly abreast, and not over forty feet from the ground, and although they must have caught sight of us when we ran for the field, seemingly unconscious of any danger. They swung directly over the stack, and without taking any particular aim—little excited, you know—I let two loads into them, and down tumbled one, with a thump on the ground that, as it came to my ears, produced a sensation as delightful as ever experienced in the field. I had killed my first Dakota goose. As the big fellows passed out over Tom, they met a still warmer reception, and two of their number fell to his cooler aim. Before we had

time to shake hands over the result, and form a mutual admiration society, another flock was seen approaching, and with a rapidity that warned us to get to cover as soon as possible. I had hardly time to catch up an armful of straw, and get into the stubble and lie down, before they were over us. Just how many we dropped out of this flock I can not at this day recall. Perhaps we didn't get any. It was a poor time for book-keeping; I can distinctly remember that; also recollect that we were just a little bit rattled for a time. The ball was now fairly opened, and how the geese did come into that field! Never before or since have I seen geese as we saw them that day. For another such an opportunity I would willingly travel hundreds of miles. For an hour the birds came in over the field with but a few minutes interval between the arrivals. Within the hour, and before we left the vicinity, not less than fifty flocks came into the field, averaging from twenty to fifty to the flock. We had no decoys, no pits dug, and no blinds of any kind. We simply lay on our backs in the stubble, with a little straw over our legs, and as the geese would come in and circle over the field, we would raise up to a sitting posture and let them have it. Often they would be too high for effective work, and all were killed at long distances. Once Tom killed three out of the same flock, in three different shots, before they could get away. That is what you might call quick work. We exhausted about sixty shells each, and then, of course, had to quit. We had seventeen geese to show for them. Not very many for so much ammunition, you think? Well, no, but under the conditions we labored it was a fair bag, and we were too well satisfied to complain; but often afterward we talked over that afternoon's sport, and estimated how many we could bring to the earth did just such an opportunity occur again, and we never placed it much less than seventy-five. We found it impossible to

transport the seventeen geese to town in our small buggy, even after tying them on, and had to dispose of some of them to people we met on the road.

The experience we had that afternoon, though never afterward so fully realized, was by no means an uncommon one at that time and during the few years preceding. Even during the few years succeeding, fields of small grain and corn were occasionally found into which the geese were sure to come in large numbers; but nowadays it is difficult to find a field in this same country into which there is a reasonable certainty of over a half-dozen flocks coming, more often less. There are exceptions, of course, and it is to locate those favored spots that taxes the patience and time of the hunter. The geese, too, are better educated, more familiar with the tactics of the enemy, and a correct knowledge of their habits is absolutely essential to successful sport.

In these days, the best shooting in South Dakota is found in the counties bordering on the Missouri River, particularly Charles Mix and Brule, with a preference for the latter. Bounded for over 100 miles by the "Big Muddy," parallel with the course of which the main flight of the geese in the spring and fall runs, the frequent sand-bars and "tow-heads"—small, low-lying islands covered by little willows and cotton-woods—afford enticing resting-places and roosting-beds for the geese. To follow the breaks in the bluffs out to the adjacent feeding-grounds in the corn and grain fields is natural, and it is here that the sportsman may be fairly sure of a few days' happiness.

Next to a good gun and properly loaded shells, the first essential of a goose-hunting expedition is decoys. Better start out with an inferior gun and shells and plenty of good decoys than a $300 hammerless and no decoys, or poor ones. The proper decoys are what are called

"profiles," made from sheet-iron, and painted to resemble a Canada goose. The necks and supports are fastened to the bodies by rivets, and the decoys can be folded up to occupy a small space. A dozen of them are enough for one pit or blind. If two are shooting, it is better to have a couple of dozen, one lot for each, as better shooting can be had, as a rule, by locating either in separate fields or on two different spots in the same field.

In searching about for a place to go when determined upon a fortnight's goose-shooting, it is a good idea to have a bag of salt beside you figuratively speaking—when the answers to your numerous inquiries come in by mail. You will need a few grains for each letter—usually—and you will not be so disappointed then when you reach the hunting-grounds; for, on the best of grounds, and in the most likely territory, goose-shooting is very uncertain sport, and is becoming more so every year; but if you are bent upon having a little experience with the geese, let me suggest that you make your trial trip upon paper—with me. It may save you a needless amount of time and expense, and it would be strange were not your total of geese larger.

You must come with the expectation of roughing it if necessary, and prepared to at any time exchange the fairly comfortable quarters of the country hotel for the humble lodging of a Bohemian cabin, or a night's roost in his barn depending somewhat upon the size of the family. "Thought you said goose-shooting was deliciously lazy sport," did I hear you say? Well, yes, er, er—I did—sometimes. That was a few years ago I had reference to. It isn't quite so "deliciously lazy" nowadays. The birds are scarcer and wilder, and we may have to do considerable traveling and roughing to find them.

I want you to bring the decoys, as previously mentioned, a hunting-suit of dead grass color, and hat to

match, plenty of heavy under-clothing, and a loose-fitting, warm overcoat. Be sure that your hunting-suit and hat is light enough in color. Nine-tenths of the regulation canvas suits are too dark. About the gun, it does not matter as to size and weight. A twelve-gauge will do, but a ten-gauge is better, and an eight-gauge is better yet. The principal thing is to hit the geese, and you will be more certain to do it with a gun that you are accustomed to—be it light or heavy—than one you are unfamiliar with. Everything else being equal, the heavier gun is the better.

For a ten-gauge gun, the best all-round load for geese is five drams of powder and one ounce of No. 2 shot. When they come in well to the decoys, No. 4's in the right barrel and No. 2's in the left is about the thing. Do not be misled into loading any larger shot under any circumstances. A few loads of heavier shot, for chance shots at long distances, would not be out of place in your cartridge-box, and always have a few dozen shells loaded with 6's for a stray prairie chicken or jack-rabbit.

Well, suppose you put in an appearance, properly equipped, about November 1st, and find me somewhere in the neighborhood of the Missouri River, in South Dakota. "What is the prospect for geese?" is your first natural inquiry. It's hard to tell; we will have to do a little exploring on the morrow. I do not make a practice of questioning farmers. The sources of information thus taken are too uncertain in results. It has cost me many a wild goose chase to learn this. Not one farmer in ten is a sportsman, and not over one in ten hunt at all, and only an insignificant few have any conception of what constitutes satisfactory shooting. If a stray flock of geese happens to alight on Mr. Farmer's stubble-field or in his corn some morning or evening, it is likely that he will say that "there's piles of 'em." If they chance to

come a few mornings or evenings in succession, he will tell you that they are there every morning. You drive out to his place, and find that only one flock has been feeding on his farm any of the time, at which, perhaps, you get an indifferent shot. It has taken a ten-mile drive before daylight on a cold, frosty morning to learn this, and as you slowly pick up your decoys, and place your trappings in the buggy, you naturally fall to wondering if all men are liars, or are geese uncertain. As the Bohemians say, "I tank so."

So we go to the livery stable in the morning, and secure a light driving team, with a buggy or wagon to match. We will put in but one box of a dozen decoys to-day, for the chances are exceedingly slim for an opportunity of setting any of them up, or securing any shooting whatever. This is more of an exploring trip than anything else, remember. If we find any geese this morning, they will either be in the stubbles or corn, and too late to get to work on them; but we will put in a couple of shovels, for we may want to use them.

We have traveled nearly all the morning, and most of the geese we have seen have been on their way to the river from their morning flight for food. You will notice that they all fly in that peculiar drag-shape so familiar from pictures you have seen. This is always their manner of flight when bound for some particular locality. When flying across the country in search of food, with no definite spot in view, they move in a low, sweeping, undulating line, and nearly abreast—now rising high in the air at some suspicious object below, now swerving down to within twenty feet of the ground, only to arise again farther on, until lost to sight in the distant horizon.

The geese we have seen hurrying for a drink in the river will be coming back again this afternoon. As this

is our first trip out, of course it is impossible to tell just what time to look for them; but it is perfectly safe to say that it will be at the same time as yesterday afternoon, and that it will be the same time to-morrow afternoon, for it is a remarkable peculiarity of wild geese that they leave their roosting-grounds and go out to feed with a regularity truly wonderful. I have frequently timed their afternoon flights so accurately that I would not have five minutes to wait after setting up my decoys.

"Whoa!"

Look at that stubble-field yonder! it's full of 'em, just as sure as you're alive. What! want to get out and make a sneak on them? My dear fellow, you couldn't get within rifle-shot of them to save your life. The grass is high, to be sure, but the stubble-field is much larger than it looks from this distance; they are near the center of it, and if you could crawl to its edge without being discovered—which is extremely improbable—you would still be 150 yards away. Take my advice now, as well as hereafter; don't ever waste your time trying to creep upon geese sitting either on a stubble or in a corn-field. It is an almost impossible task.

There they go! They got suspicious at our stopping; evidence to them that we were plotting them no good. Lots of them, are there not? Must be a dozen or twenty big flocks in that outfit. They are going to the river. Let us drive over and take a look at the field. Had we kept on driving, they would not have taken flight, unless we drove very close to them. When there is a chance to make a sneak on them, the team must not be stopped, but the shooter drop out of the wagon into the grass while the team is moving; and while the team and driver endeavor to retain the attention of the geese, the hunter crawls up on them from an opposite direction. We

reach the field, and find, upon looking it over carefully, that while it does not give evidence of having been a regular feeding-ground for any considerable length of time, yet it is a likely looking spot—not a house within a mile of it, and away from any road. It is almost noon, the sun is getting hot, and taking everything into consideration, we might as well halt right here for a time. We may get some good shooting here this afternoon, or toward evening. We will unload our decoys and shovels, and drive over into that swale a half-mile away, take the horses from the buggy, and while they get a little fresh grass, we will sample the contents of the lunch-basket, which, aside from the substantials, contains a few bottles of ginger ale—the best drink for prairie hunting you can find.

As we have got several hours to dispose of here, perhaps no better opportunity will come to give you a few hints on goose-shooting in general, flavored, may be, with some interesting personal reminiscences.

In the first place, there is quite a science in setting up decoys properly, and in locating or arranging your pit or blind in connection with them. The decoys should be set at least ten feet apart, with the face of the profiles toward the direction from which the geese are most likely to come. A part of the decoys want to be set at right angles to the others, of course, so that the sides of some of them show from any direction. When set out ten feet apart, they will look pretty well spread out; but if you will step off a couple of hundred yards or so, they will look much more like a genuine flock of geese than when set closer together. It is strange how life-like they look when set out properly. I have had mine crawled upon and shot at on two different occasions, much to my amusement. They present a much more natural appearance than a decoy-duck, I think. By the way, let me

tell you how to "catch on" to decoy-ducks when puzzled over the matter. If you will notice, a decoy-duck always rocks with the action of the waves or ripples on the water; a live duck does not, but retains a perfect perpendicular. In setting out your geese decoys, avoid setting them with heads in one direction. This is the position the geese assume when uneasy, or about to take flight, and is not such as to gain the confidence of a passing flock. If shooting alone, and there is a breeze blowing, locate yourself about thirty yards on the leeward side of the decoys. The reason of this is obvious. In common with all wild fowl, geese always alight against the wind. By being on the leeward side, they will, when through circling around the field, fly over you with set wings preparatory to settling among the decoys, and give you a much better shot than you could possibly obtain were you on the opposite side. If you have a companion with you, place the decoys between you, and locate your pits or blinds so that the geese will fly between you, as they come into the decoys toward the wind. You then get a deadly cross-fire on them.

A friend and myself were thus fixed one afternoon when a flock of five Hutchins geese came in. We killed them all. In a few minutes, another flock of seven came in, and out of them we knocked down six. The poor, lone goose remaining went across the field, turned and came back to the decoys, and we downed him. On another occasion we wiped out a flock of thirteen in much the same manner—the geese returning to the decoys the second time. When not much hunted, it is a common occurrence for them to act in this manner, if the hunter or hunters drop into concealment immediately after the first volley. Otherwise a very suspicious and wary bird, the wild goose decoys more readily than any other. Let me relate an instance. I was shooting in a stubble one

SHOOTING GEESE OVER DECOYS.

afternoon, and lying on my back, with my feet to the decoys. I caught sight of a flock of twenty or more coming into the field directly toward me, and in line with the direction in which I was lying. After coming to within a 100 yards or so of the decoys, they suddenly stopped, and there they hung in mid-air, neither advancing nor receding. After watching their strange actions for a moment or two, I became satisfied that there was something unusual behind and beyond me to cause it, and cautiously raising and turning my head, I looked around. There sat a boy on a mule, not fifty yards away, evidently waiting to see me kill some of those geese. I told him, in language more forcible than elegant, that I would like to have him make himself scarce, which he did in a hurry; and he had no sooner left the field, when the geese, which must have seen me when I raised up to read the riot act to the boy, came right into the decoys, and I bagged a couple of them.

No, I do not always dig a pit. In fact, I rarely dig one. While much more effective shooting can be done from a pit, it is considerable work to make one large enough for practical purposes, and unless I am positive that the field selected will be visited by enough flocks to pay for the work, I do not use the shovel. If I can not find a likely hiding-spot on the edge of a field, I select the next best location in the stubble, and, with a tumble-weed or two and a little old hay or straw, manage to fool 'em completely. It is a fact, nevertheless, that this manner of shooting has its disadvantages, particularly to one unaccustomed to goose-shooting. In shooting from such a position, it is absolutely important that the shooter lie as motionless as the stubble which surrounds him as the geese approach, never moving a muscle until the right moment comes to arise and shoot. When the geese come in from one certain direction, this is not a

difficult thing to do, but when as liable to come into the field from one direction as another, one must be something of a contortionist and acrobat to be in the best position to shoot every time. It is also much more difficult to judge of distances while lying flat in a stubble, or below it, than when sitting upright in a pit. This reminds me that the hardest lesson you will find to learn is to know when the geese are within reasonable killing distance. Ordinarily, a flock of geese 100 yards away do not look to be over fifty, and the deception is even greater when coming head on. You will find your greatest fault and lack of success—if success is lacking—will be due to shooting too soon. I can not impress this fact too strongly. Let them come in. When once headed for the decoys, let them approach as close as they will before you move a muscle to shoot. When they sheer off, or have gotten as near to you as it is possible for them to get, then let them have it. Just as long as they keep approaching, don't you move, no matter if you are positive that they are within fifty feet of you; otherwise you are extremely liable to discover that as a goose-hunter you are not a glittering success. Often the geese will come into a field, and pass within 100 yards or so of the decoys with the appearance of not having seen them, or, if they have, with no intention of coming any nearer—something after the manner of canvas-back ducks. Keep low, give them time to circle around a few times to investigate the general appearance of things, and your patience will be rewarded. They are just as anxious to see what that other flock (decoys) have got for supper as you are to have them. Don't spoil it all.

The flight of wild geese is very deceptive. To the casual observer, they have the appearance of a slow and lazy flight. Nothing could be further from the truth. The rapidity with which they can cover five or ten miles

of space is simply astonishing. It will be well for you to remember this when you come to shooting at them over decoys, instead of deluding yourself with the idea that because they are a big bird you could not miss one if you tried. You heard about the chap, didn't you, that complained that "all the rabbits hereabouts are about six inches too short?" You have had enough experience on other game-birds to know that when a flock arises you must single out your bird instead of shooting into the flock at random. Well, the same rule holds good on goose-shooting. Always try, too, to get your gun on one in a bunch; if you miss it, you may catch one next to it, and you stand a good chance of knocking down two or more with one barrel. If a goose falls on the stubble or prairie out of your sight, go and get it at once, unless there are particular reasons why you should not leave your position. Often birds that you may think fell stone dead are only winged or badly wounded, and the readiness and facility with which a wounded goose will hide in six inches of grass is astonishing. I have had wounded geese get away from me on a prairie under circumstances in which it would not seem possible for a quail to escape.

Just reach me another sandwich, please.

Did I ever use live decoys? Well, yes, after a fashion. I do not think much of them, and, furthermore, I never talked with an experienced goose-hunter who did. We read considerable about them in books and writings on field sports, but my own experience and the experience of others leads me to believe that live geese decoys are a delusion and a fraud. All that I have ever seen, when taken into a field and picketed out, would go the length of the string, and then stretch flat on the ground and lie there. A friend of mine had three which, when at home in the yard, would pretty near burst their throats calling when a flock went over the house, but

when taken into a field would act just as stated. Winged geese, if placed among the decoys, will remain with them of their own accord, and it is amusing, often, to watch them. When you approach the decoys they will scamper off across the field, and as often return after you are hidden in your pit or blind; but I never saw or knew of one so situated to call a passing flock, or do anything else but lie flat on the ground when a flock was hovering near.

Well, I don't know but what we had better be moving toward the field. By the time we get our pits dug and the decoys set out, it will be time for the geese to be coming out for supper.

Here we are. You dig your pit here, and I will dig mine over there. Dig it with a seat in one end, and deep enough so that when sitting down your shoulders will be about on a line with the stubble. After your pit is completed, go and get a small armful of that old hay on the edge of the stubble and strew it around the edge of the pit, but not too thickly –just enough to cover the fresh dirt. I have given you the best side, for, as the geese come in over the decoys against the wind, you will be able to swing your gun from right to left instead of the more awkward way, from left to right.

There, everything is in ship-shape style, as they say on the water, and now if the geese will only make us a few friendly —

Mark west! See them, eh? All right. Now bear in mind what I told you at luncheon. Let them come in if they come this way.

They didn't come in, did they? though they must have heard me calling. Got more important business farther east; I saw them go down in a stubble about a mile away. There comes another flock, and there's another right behind it. Get down!

All right. You know how to keep down, that's certain. Both those flocks have gone where the first one went. Wish we were over there, but it's too late to make a change now. Get down!

This is interesting, isn't it, to sit in these pits and watch flock after flock pass within a quarter of a mile, and go to another field? That is a regular feeding-ground where they have gone. You will notice that each flock turns neither to the right or left, but flies straight to that one field, and that, too, without having seen any other flock go there. That is a sure sign of a regular feeding-ground. Such a place is absolutely sure of affording good shooting for several consecutive mornings or evenings, depending somewhat upon whether they visit the field once or twice a day, and when. To-morrow afternoon I want you to come out to this field. I may not be able to get away and go with you, and it is not necessary that I should. After what you have seen to-day, and the few hints I have given you, you can scarcely fail to bring in a dozen geese to-morrow night. Where are the geese that were in this field this morning? You mean the ones we frightened away, I suppose? You tell I don't know; possibly we might have seen some of them in the flock going over to that other field. They probably dropped in here by chance this morning. Some flock happened to stop here, and others saw them and followed suit. You don't understand why they should go a mile or two farther on for no better food. Bless your soul! neither does anyone else. There is just as good feeding-grounds within a mile of the river as there is out here ten miles away, and possibly better. Why they fly across ten or fifteen miles of good feeding-grounds for something no better, no man can find out, but do it they do, and elsewhere as well as in Dakota. Perhaps they like to work up an appetite.

Well, the show is over, and we might as well pull up and go home. By staying here an hour longer we might catch a goose or two from some stray flock, but it would hardly pay. You will have all the fun you want to-morrow. We will drive over and locate that field exactly, so you will have no trouble in finding it again, stop and dig a pit for you, and then we will take the nearest road home. It's a little hard luck to go back without a feather, but if you hunt geese much, you will soon learn not to mind a day like this. Remember, all is not lost. What you lack in game, you have gained in knowledge.

If the reader has patiently followed me thus far, not much can be added that will prove either interesting or instructive. Possibly it would have added to the imaginative afternoon's hunt to have capped it with a score or more of geese, but I have written it from many days' actual experience.

As the season advances, along toward the middle of November and Thanksgiving, the geese begin to seek the corn-fields, and the hunting of them becomes more tinged with disappointment than pleasure. About this time they make but one trip a day for food, that in the morning, and they generally remain out all day. After feeding, they will seek some bare knoll or burnt piece of prairie in the vicinity of the corn-field for a loafing-place until again hungry. They never alight in a corn-field, but always on the edge, and walk in. They prefer corn planted upon sod (first breaking), in that such fields of corn are usually of thin stand, the stalks short, and the ears easily reached, and they can readily see around and about them. At this time of year they do not decoy readily, each flock seeming to prefer its own company. When the geese are known to be feeding upon a certain field of corn, make a blind, about fifty feet from its edge,

by pulling up several hills of corn and standing them together; then set the decoys out a rod or two from the edge of the corn. If a stubble adjoins the field, set them on the stubble. While it is not probable that they will come in directly to the decoys, yet they will be less suspicious upon seeing what, to them, appears to be another flock.

In the spring of the year, wild geese are so uncertain in their habits, and so erratic in their flights, in Nebraska and Dakota, that even were not spring shooting to be discountenanced on general principles, it is poor sport hunting them. I have never known them to decoy at this season of the year; and they never seem to be twice in the same place.

The general directions I have given for hunting the wild goose in Dakota, will apply to Nebraska and all the Western States and Territories, where their habits are nearly the same. Years ago, the best goose-shooting in the United States was to be had along the Platte River, in Nebraska. Aside from excellent stubble-field and corn-field shooting, there was superb shooting on the sand-bars of the river. The usual method of building a blind on a sand-bar is to sink a barrel, or water-tight box, in the sand, around which is thrown pieces of drift-wood or brush, the whole so constructed as to leave the immediate surroundings as natural and undisturbed as possible. If the box is clear from brush or débris, none should be employed in arranging the blind. Into the box—a shallow one—can be placed some hay for the hunter to lie on, and around about it are placed the decoys. If the weather is clear and fair, and particularly on moonlight nights, the geese prolong their afternoon visits to the stubbles until late in the evening, and the concealed hunter often gets fine shooting by the light of the moon.

The sportsman whose business is such that a goose-hunt is only permissible during the winter months will find a visit to Texas filled with pleasant results. The geese generally arrive in that locality about November 1st, and keep coming until the middle of December. The natives will tell you that but three varieties winter there, namely, the Canadas and the white and black brant. As in many other localities, everything in the goose family is a brant except the Canadas. In Texas the geese resort to the pond-holes and marshy grounds as a loafing-place and to the high, dry, upland prairies for feed. The hours for feeding are the same as in more northern localities. They feed chiefly on the young sprouts of green grass and such insects as they can pick up on the prairie. As the prairies are studded all over with pond-holes and marshes in many portions of the State, the geese have no trouble in finding ample feeding-grounds in close proximity to their roosting-places; hence they fly very low in going and coming, and in moving about from place to place in search of food, in localities where not much hunted, they also fly close to the ground, not over twenty or thirty feet high. The sportsman can therefore find good shooting by roaming the prairies in a hap-hazard manner, and keeping both eyes open for passing flocks. The general plan of hunting them, however, and the most successful one, is by building a blind upon the shore of some marshy place, or, if the indications are better, in the center. If the hunter is supplied with profile decoys, they can be set out by binding a stick to the supporting rod, and shoving it into the mud, until the decoy presents a life-like appearance. A dead goose may be set up as a decoy by pushing one end of a stick in the mud and the other end, sharpened, up through the neck into the head. This is easier written than done, however, as it is quite a trick to set up a dead goose or duck so that it will look

life-like; but practice and a little patience will soon enable the amateur to do the work successfully. Incidentally and conclusively—it is such seemingly trifling things that characterize the successful sportsman. As in everything else, it is the sum total of the little details that go to make a perfect whole.

WILD TURKEY SHOOTING.

By George W. Baines ("Fusil").

THE *Meleagris galloparo* is essentially an American fowl, and in these late years has come to be a genuine southerner, being found but seldom in sections north of the historic Mason and Dixon's line. He flourishes also in Mexico and Central America.

As this article is not designed nor desired to be a *treatise*, I shall not take up space with facts and observations easily found in standard works on natural history and in encyclopedias. The wild turkey is a *turkey*, and compares with the domestic fowl about as a game chicken does with the common mixed-blooded dunghill, being a trimmer and more symmetrical fowl, with longer neck, wings, and legs. The wild turkey varies slightly in color according to the various sections where found, the lighter shades predominating as the equator is neared. The hen is a dusty-brown color on the breast, neck, and upper back, and the lower back is a dirty gray, or rusty brown. The gobbler is about the same color of the hen, except on the breast, neck, and upper back, which are a glossy, green-tinted black, or silky, purplish hue. Sometimes, as he stands in the sun, he appears to be a rich bronze. Generally the heads of wild turkeys are light bluish color, often more white than blue, especially with gobblers in the spring, they having the power to change color from blue to white or red at will. Both hens and

gobblers have large wattles, that are nearly always white. In the spring, an ardent gobbler's wattles are red. Gobblers are always armed with spurs, and ornamented with beards, varying in length according to age, the former sometimes measuring an inch and a quarter long and the latter twelve inches. Hens sometimes have beards, but they are not very common; on my last turkey-hunt, of the three hens bagged, two wore beards. I have seen a few gobblers in my long experience that had more than one beard -one that had three. In weight, the wild and domestic turkeys are about the same, the tendency of the former being to grow slightly heavier with the gobblers, and with the hens lighter. Sixteen pounds for gobblers and eight for hens, I believe to be a fair average in weight. Still it is not uncommon to find gobblers that will pull the scales to twenty pounds, and sometimes—but rarely—one will be brought in that will weigh twenty-five, six, or seven. I myself killed in one day two that weighed twenty-five and twenty-seven, respectively. A friend of mine in the Indian Territory tells of killing one that tipped the beam at twenty-eight; and Prof. J. L. Smith, one of the Texas pioneers, and one of the most truthful men I ever knew, told me of one he killed that weighed even thirty pounds.

The wild turkey is a much hardier and stronger fowl than those we rear at home, and so the gobblers put more vim into their gobbling and strutting. How the gobbler makes that thunder-like sound when he struts, I do not know, but am certain that it is not by scraping his wings on the ground, since he struts as loudly in a tree, where his wings touch nothing, and where he can not walk at all, as when on the ground. I am also sure that his crop, puffed full of air, is an important factor, since no turkey ever struts without this. It is easy to distinguish a fat gobbler from a poor one, or an old one

from a young one, by the character of his gobbling. If the hunter hears several gobblers, and wishes to select the fattest, let him go after the one whose gobble is the

THE WILD TURKEY.—Meleagris ocellata.

heaviest and most muffled. Beware of the one with the tenor voice, especially if he cuts his gobble short.

Wild turkeys always go in flocks except in the spring, and often, in small flocks, then; but the old gobblers will

be found associating together, while the hens and young gobblers will be together, except at this season.

When spring fairly opens, the flocks break up, and the breeding season begins. The old hens are the first to go off and make their nests, always followed by the gobblers to the vicinity where they are going to hatch their young. Gobblers always open the love-making season, the hens seeming to be very coy at first. At this time, the gobblers fight each other vigorously, break up the flocks, scatter out over the country, and give themselves up to gobbling, strutting, and rambling. At this early period, as they have no hens with them, they come to call very promptly. In a week or ten days the flocks of hens break up, and they scatter out into the hills to make their nests, and soon become "located," as the old hunters say, by which is meant that they settle down to a certain range in the vicinity of their nests. At this time an old gobbler is very apt to have from one to four —sometimes more hens with him, and he manages to have them pretty well bound to him, so that they are not likely to go off to other gobblers. They know his gobble, and go to him when they hear him. Any gobbler in this fortunate situation is likely to be very hard to call up by the hunter, either morning or evening. The best way to call such is to get near him while he is gobbling on his roost, and select an open space into which he can and will be likely to go when he flies down. A few low yelps, given before he flies down, will generally bring him, and if he gobbles to call promptly, let the hunter yelp no more, but be ready for business. Nine chances to one, he will go in shooting distance of the well-hid yelper as soon as he is off his roost, especially if there be an open spot for him to get into; for he likes such a place early in the morning, before there is much light, and at this season he is apt to fly down very early, sometimes

while it is very dusky. His purpose seems to be to get somewhere near the hen, and wait for her to fly down to him. The hunter will find it very fortunate if he can get on an open hill-side above the gobbler. Those gobblers that are unprovided with hens, from any cause whatever —and where turkeys are plentiful there will always be some of this sort—are easily called up at any time, mornings or evenings.

The hen lays from ten to fifteen eggs, in a rudely constructed nest, scratched out in the ground, and filled with leaves or grass. The eggs are always covered up with leaves or grass when she goes away. It is not uncommon for nests to be made near houses, roads, and in fields or orchards. A wheat, oat, or barley field is a fine place for them. The period of incubation is twenty-eight days. The young are hardy, active, and shy from the first, and in two or three weeks are able to fly a little, from which time they go into bushes, and soon into trees, to roost. The mother is a model for care and good management, and is usually very successful in bringing up her young. Soon after the hens begin to sit upon their nests, the gobblers again flock together, and remain so until the next spring. The hens also drift into flocks, with their young, along in August and September, and it is often the case that three or four broods will be combined.

Unquestionably, the wild turkey is rapidly decreasing in this country, owing chiefly to the want of suitable game laws, and the murderous work of the market-hunter. My opinion is, that the open season should embrace the months of November, December, January, and February alone. I know that many will object to being shut up during the gobbling season, but I see no good reason why other game should be protected during breeding-time and the turkey not. Fond as I am of hunting at this season, I am ready to see spring shooting forbidden. The

one reason for keeping the season open during the spring is the fact that comparatively few hens are killed then; but more gobblers are than at any other time, and the killing of gobblers in any section does not materially interfere with breeding, unless all should be killed, which is not likely, for if there be a gobbler in the country, the hens will find him when they need him, and he is such a thorough polygamist that he will file no objection. One gobbler can fertilize all the eggs in his section, and then gobble for more. Still, I can not resist the force of the fable of the hen (or goose) that laid the golden egg, and can not see why the turkey should not have just as fair a chance to perpetuate its species as other kinds of game. I must confess, however, that I would listen to a strong argument in favor of spring shooting at gobblers *only* with a partial ear, and my great fondness for pitting skill against turkey wariness would prejudice me largely in its favor; and, if not convinced, I fear I should be like the regulation New Year's reformers—defer reformation until next year. Were the framing of a law left to me, there would be great danger of an exception or two being introduced, as is reported of a law against fire-hunting for deer in an early day in Arkansas. It was said that a representative introduced a bill on this subject, when the most influential member, an inveterate fire-hunter, made a vigorous speech in its favor, and concluded by saying that he would vote for the bill, provided he could get an amendment excepting any night when it was "*very still, very dark, and a leetle misting of rain.*" The temptation to fire-hunt on such a night was too strong; and so the temptation to go for a gobbler would be very great any still, clear morning in the early spring, especially if a light shower had fallen during the night.

I have hunted nearly all kinds of game in the United States and Mexico, from the buffalo down to blackbirds,

and I know of nothing that taxes the skill and patience of the hunter more than the wild turkey. It is *wild*, and no mistake. It is also wily. It has the keenest eye and quickest ear of anything I have hunted. The hunter must know turkeys as a pilot knows the channel, if he succeed well. He must have a keen eye, quick decision, and the patience of a statue. Besides, he must be able to "talk turkey" as well as understand it.

For turkey-shooting, both the shot-gun and rifle have their advocates; and it must be confessed that both have their advantages. I like both, and often when I have one I wish I had the other. The *ideal* turkey-gun is a three-barrel, weighing nine or ten pounds. I speak from experience. The rifle ought to take the 38-55 cartridge, and must be an accurate shooter. The shot barrels ought to be ten-gauge, and be loaded with 4½ drams of powder and 1¼ ounces of No. 6 shot in the left barrel, and five drams of powder and 1½ ounces 00 shot in the right. They must be extra-good shooters, or the user of them will be tempted to say ugly words quite often. At all distances under forty yards, the small shot should be fired, at the necks of turkeys, just under their heads, and the large shot, at their bodies, all distances over forty and up to sixty yards; at distances beyond these, use the rifle. When I have used a three-barrel, I seldom fired the large shot at turkeys at all, except when running, flying, or on the roost when it was too dark to shoot at their necks. If a turkey was not near enough for the small shot, I generally used the rifle. The surest load ever sent after a turkey when no farther than forty yards, is the No. 6's, fired at the neck.

As to "callers," I hardly know what to write, since every hunter who has been successful with any particular kind thinks that the best to be found anywhere. I have myself used seven different kinds of callers, always returning

to the use of a green leaf, especially when I had a sharp gobbler to deal with. I never could make the thin rubber sheets used by dentists answer my purpose so well as the leaf. For a beginner, I believe there is no caller so easily learned to use as one made as follows: Saw out a section of a cow's horn two inches long, the larger end being about two inches in diameter, and plug with some hard, well-seasoned wood the smaller end. It must be a perfect-fitting plug, very tight, and about half an inch thick. Trim out the open end of the horn for a quarter of an inch, until the edges are nearly sharp; and then, with glass or steel, scrape the horn on the outside until it is about an eighth of an inch thick all round. Get a four-penny nail with a very large head—the larger the better—and drive it squarely into the center of the plug, on the outside, taking care to leave a full inch of the nail sticking out on the outside. By holding this in the right hand, cupped over the hollow of the horn, and scraping the nail on a very fine but rather soft whetstone—a razor hone is best—a good call is produced, by patient and intelligent practice. The whetstone should be very small and thin. Practice will show anyone how to use this kind of a caller. Always hold the nail slightly off perpendicular to the stone, and scrape toward you, drawing the edge of the nail-head against it.

A favorite method of hunting turkeys in heavily timbered sections, especially in the bottoms, is with a dog. This has the double advantage of giving the hunter a chance at them in the trees, if they do not fly into pines or other thick-leaved or mossy trees, and also a good chance at calling them, since they generally are well scattered when flushed by a dog. Almost any kind of dog, keen of nose and still of tongue when running a trail, can be made good for turkeys, but I have found that pointers, or mongrels having pointer blood, usually turn out best.

No dog that gives tongue while trailing can ever be first-class for turkey-hunting, since turkeys are easily alarmed, and will run like deer, taking care to cross all the streams and sloughs possible, or go to the hills, when chased, from which they can fly off to other hills, very often before the dog gets near them. The best dog is very swift on a hot track, always running still, and hence usually dashes right into a flock before they know he is coming, putting them into the first trees they can reach. He ought to be noisy enough after he flushes them, as this shows the hunter where they are, and also distracts their attention. Then he must be well trained, and kept always under good control, so that he can be whistled to heel, or made to lie like a chunk when necessary. One of the best turkey-dogs I ever hunted with was a dropper, good alike for quail, prairie chicken and turkey —yes, even for squirrels and a crippled deer; but the very best I ever knew, I owned and trained myself (of course). His mother was called a Scotch terrier, and his sire was unknown. After hunting with him three years, it did seem that he knew everything necessary for a dog to know about turkey-hunting, and surely was as devoted to his master and as fond of hunting as any dog could be. When my father wrote me of his death, at ten years of age, it was impossible to hide my grief.

It is December, and the trees are naked and dead-like on this chilly day. Their ashy-tinted branches had snow on them last week, and they seem to be still shivering as a gentle breeze sweeps through them. The dull, dead leaves cover the earth everywhere, hiding acorn and hackberry and elm-seed, good food for the turkey. A friend of mine, Bob by name, is with me, and we have come horseback, two miles from home, for the purpose of laying in a supply of turkeys for Christmas, and have hitched our horses in the edge of Caney Bottom, which

at this place is about half a mile wide, and is a splendid place for the game we hunt. I know that there is a flock of about thirty turkeys ranging here, and with my famous dog, Jeff, to find them, feel absolutely certain of getting all we want to-day. Bob is a novice after turkeys, and carries a heavy double-barrel shot-gun, which he knows well how to use on other kinds of game. I carry a rifle, the companion of years, the delight of my heart, the winner of many a trophy from the forest.

"We will walk, Bob, because the Bottom is very thick in many places, and we can do better every way. We will hunt up this side of the creek for half a mile, and if unsuccessful, then down the other until opposite here." On entering the Bottom, Jeff is told to go, and he is off like a well-trained pointer, and not unlike him, either, in his ranging back and forth across our course. Every now and then he looks to see which way we are going, always keeping in sight. Here and there we see where turkeys have been scratching, turning up the leaves as they searched for their food. After having gone half a mile, we come to the Jones field, and stop for a short rest. Though we have seen plenty of fresh signs, Jeff caught no scent, and I am sure the turkeys are on the other side of the creek. While we sit and talk, we hear some noisy mallards over in the field, where there is a grassy pond that has afforded me much sport many a time, for it is a famous place for ducks. Bob insists upon trying to get a shot at those mallards, urging as a reason that we may not find the turkeys; but he is restrained by the strong assurance that we will find them, and besides, when after turkeys, there should be no promiscuous shooting, since turkeys easily take fright if a gun be fired near them, and will get away as fast as possible, going into the hills, if near enough, so that a dog can do but little with them.

It is now 11 o'clock, and we cross the creek on a drift, taking a course angling toward the hills, down the Bottom; and, before we have gone 300 yards, Jeff begins to sniff the air significantly, and touch his cold, damp nose to a twig or vine here and there, all the while wagging his bushy tail energetically. There are very fresh scratchings, and some tracks seen in the damp soil indicate the direction the turkeys have gone. "It is a cold trail, Bob, but Jeff will find them, sure." The faithful, intelligent animal trots from side to side, keeping the general course of the tracks. Every now and then he stops and takes a good long smell in some moist place where a turkey has walked. After we have gone perhaps 200 yards, it is easy to see that Jeff is getting livelier, and is beginning to settle so well on the scent that he hardly sways from one course. Now he straightens out, stops wagging his tail, and goes as straight as though he knows exactly where the turkeys are, and, before we are aware of it, he is out of sight, though we run after him as fast as we can. All at once we run on him, for he lost the trail, and is busy trying to get it again, which enabled us to overtake him. In a moment he is off again, and we rush after him, only to lose sight of him in a few seconds. Still we run as fast as possible, while I keep one ear turned somewhat to the course we travel. All at once I hear the well-known and welcome "put, put, put," and we stop at once. "Here, Bob, squat right here by me, and cock both barrels of your gun. Keep still." We hear the turkeys flying in different directions, and lighting in the trees; one is seen to stop in a tall pin-oak about sixty yards from us; but I am watching intently under the bushes, for I know what may happen. Long ago I learned the trick turkeys often play on a dog, dodging around and behind him, and running straight back on the track, without taking wing at all. Some are almost sure to try it,

where there is a flock. Sure enough, there they come, a hen and a young gobbler, right at us. "Take them, Bob," I say, and he fires both barrels quickly. The hen, with rapid wing, climbs the air, right out to the top of the trees, and sails away untouched, while the gobbler, with leg hanging down, goes swinging through the timber, to fall, with a crash, in the bushes a short distance from us, but out of sight. "That's all right, Bob; we'll get him after awhile." As Bob loads his gun, I slip to a large tree near by, and laying my rifle up beside it, take a shot at the turkey we saw light, and which had the temerity to remain after Bob's shooting. It wilts at the keen rifle-crack, and falls like a chunk. "Now, Bob, follow my instructions already given. Go to where you hear Jeff barking, for there are several turkeys there. Don't be uneasy about my part of the sport; you just take care of yourself." I pass along where my turkey fell, and hang it in a bush. After going a short distance, a young gobbler is seen sitting high up in a tall pin-oak, about 100 feet from me. It would be a nice shot to take him now, but there are too many intervening limbs. My plan is soon formed. There is a large over-cup oak about half-way between me and him, and nearly in line. Behind this I slip, and then on noiselessly to it, taking care to keep the turkey exactly behind it from me. I peep out, to make the discovery that I am in a bad place to shoot, as there are so many twigs in the line of sight. Both sides of the tree are tried, and then I squat down, and see how the prospect is. I see the turkey is growing restless, and so I step out from the tree, in the hope of finding an open space through the limbs, through which to shoot, but can't find it, and in sheer desperation, since I must shoot very quickly, I do my best at him; but he goes away unhurt, while I have the poor satisfaction of seeing a limb half an inch thick

fall to the ground, cut by my bullet. Some 150 yards farther on, I see a small hen standing straight up, very high, in a tall cotton-wood, and she doesn't look bigger than a crow, though she is not more than seventy-five yards from me. Just in front, a little to my right, is an old dead tree, and to this I quickly step, to find that there is a clean, open way for my bullet. Squatting down, and laying my rifle on a knot of the old tree, a fine bead is drawn on that turkey's breast, which is a hard thing to do, as she stands clean against the open sky beyond. Hunters know how trying it is to make a rifle-shot under these conditions; but I make it successfully. Taking my game on my shoulder, I go to find Bob, who has not fired since I left him, but has succeeded in scaring away a number of turkeys. He answers my whistle, and I soon reach him. "Bob, you are not doing as you were told, or you would have had several shots before this." He confessed he had not obeyed orders. "Now I'll show you." Jeff is barking not far from us, and, on going in that direction, we find he has a young gobbler. "Walk right after me, and when I say shoot, lose no time." The turkey is seventy-five or eighty yards away, sitting with its left side toward us. We walk swiftly, almost trotting sometimes, as though we were going to pass well to the front, and gradually circle nearer and nearer, until we are about to pass to the turkey's right side, at which time we are not more than thirty yards from him. I have kept an eye on him all the while, and now say "shoot." In an instant, Bob throws up his gun, but I walk on. It is a good kill, and Bob is happy. "Oh, I can do it now right along. I was afraid I might scare them before; but I see now how it is done," said my companion, enthusiastically. Pretty soon, Jeff has found another, and so I send Bob to try his skill by himself. Sure enough, he gets his turkey. When turkeys have

been flushed by a dog into the trees, and one uses a shot-gun, it is often impossible to slip near enough to shoot them, and the best way is to walk right ahead as though you were going to pass by them, always circling gradually nearer, and avoid getting behind them. If one hesitate or waver, he is almost sure to scare his turkey when employing this method. As in courting, so in this, "Faint heart never won fair lady." But the trustful, confident, steady-going, quick-moving soul is very apt to win; still, of course, he will sometimes fail, though less often than when the slipping process is tried. When using a rifle, I generally try to slip on turkeys in the trees, because when they are approached openly they watch the hunter closely, and when he stops to shoot they often fly at once, giving him no chance to draw a bead; and then, when I have a rifle, I can make much longer shots, and take more time in selecting an open place through which to send my bullet. I have never found this way of walking openly around them to succeed, except when they had been flushed by a dog or by shooting at them. On the roost, they do not sit so well. They seem to think that the hunter has not seen them, and is going to pass them, not noticing that he is gradually getting nearer to them. Whenever he stops, though, they have their fears fully aroused, and are off like a shot, as a rule.

Calling Jeff to heel, we go to where Bob shot the young gobbler that flew away crippled, and taking the course he flew, Jeff is sent out to find him, a task soon performed. Five turkeys now swing by their necks to trees; three fell to Bob's gun. I am glad for him, and give him my congratulations.

"Well, Bob, we could doubtless find other turkeys scattered through the Bottom, if we would take time to hunt them, but I believe we can do better by calling them." So we go out near where Jeff flushed the flock,

everywhere looking for a suitable place for our purpose. Finally we find a tolerably open space, sixty or seventy yards across, in the very center of which there are some old rotten logs. Rolling two together, so as to make a V, we pile brush and sticks on them and about them, making a very natural-looking blind, that will completely hide us on all sides, at the same time allowing plenty of openings to see and shoot through. We have left an open space on the inside, from which we scrape away all the leaves, so that if we have to move we will make no noise. There is plenty of room within, and we sit down, back to back, so as to command a good view in every direction. Two hunters, understanding each other well, can always do better than one, because by sitting as we sit, those startling and confusing "back surprises" are effectually prevented. Jeff lies snugly by my side, but shows himself to be wide-awake to every proceeding. The leaves are all dead, and I have no caller except my lips, which always serve me, as a *dernier ressort*. By folding the lower lip under the upper, and sucking, while holding my hands closely cupped over my mouth, pretty good yelping can be done. When all is ready, a few low, muffled yelps are given, rather long drawn out. It has been half an hour since the last shot was fired. Quietness reigns in the solemn forest. Not even a noisy crow is heard, near or far. In a few minutes, I yelp again, and immediately we hear a long, keen, loud *kee-ouk* on Bob's side. I whisper: "Get ready; that's a fool of a young gobbler, and he'll be on you before you know it." A yelp or two by me, and we hear the pattering of his feet in the leaves as he comes rushing to destruction. Jeff gives a convulsive shiver, for he has heard everything, and knows what is going on as well as either of us. The deadly gun booms, and the young fellow, deceived by a motherly yelp, lies fluttering in death. Jeff springs out

and on him in a jiffy, and fondles him, not tearing out a feather, seeming to say: "I wish you would get up and run, so I could have the fun of catching you. It is too bad to kill turkeys so dead as this." Into our blind we get, and in ten or fifteen minutes I yelp again, about as at first, when we immediately hear a young hen, 200 yards or more away to my left. Her call is a sort of half-whistle and half-yelp, and that is how I know what she is. I yelp again, a little louder than before, to indicate confidence and unconsciousness of danger. She yelps repeatedly, drawing nearer fast. Pretty soon she steps into the opening, as she passes from my left to my front. The faithful gun comes to my face; a quick whistle stops her; the bullet crashes through her, and, with outspread wings, she lies quivering on the ground. This one is gathered in, and we again seat ourselves in the blind. We wait half an hour, but bring nothing in sight, though we have heard yelps in two or three directions. We wait half an hour longer, and have heard four or five turkeys, one that came quite near, but failed to show itself to us. Bob suggests that we go, as we have plenty, and he is growing hungry and tired. I plead for only a few minutes longer; it was a wise thing to do this time, for in less than five minutes an old hen walked shyly into the opening in front of me, and I dropped her dead before either Bob or Jeff knew what I was about.

"Now we will go, as I am even with you. Four to four, we stand. Good shooting we have done; and we've had a splendid day, haven't we?" "The best I ever had, and I'll hardly ever have another so good, I fear," Bob responds, as he heaves a big sigh. Leaving Bob with the turkeys, I go and bring the horses, that soon carry us and our game home, where, of course, we are warmly welcomed and given a good dinner by my folks. Jeff assumes guard over the turkeys as they hang by their necks to a

post, and will not let another dog, or even the negro children, get near them. They are his game as well as ours. Faithful dog! I recall even now that self-satisfied air of his, as he lay beneath the mass of legs and wings, every now and then looking up to see if they were all there, or just to feast his eyes on them and exult over the achievements of the day.

In the piny woods, or where the trees are very mossy and thick, or in the hills anywhere, but few opportunities are given the hunter to shoot turkeys in the trees after they have been flushed by a dog, but always, in such places, he has a good chance to call them up. It is always advisable to build a blind near where the turkeys flushed, selecting every time an open place, if possible, so that one can easily see a turkey as soon as it gets near. Too much care can not be bestowed upon a blind, to make it safe, and at the same time natural looking. As said before, two men, sitting back to back, are far more successful than one, in a blind, for there is no telling on which side a turkey is going to come when called. Some have thought that it is not best to use a dog in flushing turkeys, when one wishes to scatter them before calling, preferring to run them up or fire into the flock; but my experience does not justify this, and so I always use a dog, when one can be had.

When the warm, sunny days of spring arrive, and shrub and tree and earth don their new light-green robes —when the buds are bursting into leaf and flower, and the woodland songsters tune their voices for their merry concerts in the wildwoods—then the old gobblers burnish up their armor, and put on their handsomest suits of silky, plushy feather, and go forth for battle and for love. I frankly confess that I love them best at this time. My sentiments about protecting them at this time have been expressed; yet, outwiting a really sharp old gobbler is far

more interesting to me than killing half a dozen that know nothing of the hunter's wiles and arts. No gobbler ever gets too sharp for a good hunter, and sooner or later falls to his gun, if he persist in pursuit. I have never failed to bag the wiliest, best-educated gobbler, when I have had time to spend on him; and I am sure this is the general experience of good turkey-hunters.

I have known men to use domestic gobblers, trained for hunting, but I never tried them myself. From what they say, it must be a very successful method. I can not gobble very well, yet I have brought both gobblers and hens to me repeatedly by gobbling in my poor way.

As to hiding when calling gobblers, men differ; but my preference always is for a blind, hastily constructed of green bushes, if possible to obtain them. Generally, some can be found standing to suit my purpose, and these I cut so as to leave them about as high as my head while sitting on the ground. I add to them as may be necessary, taking care to protect myself on every side, especially *behind*. The bushes can be stuck in the ground, as though they grew there. On the inside, there should be space enough to allow the hunter to turn about if necessary, and so it is well to brush away dead leaves. I have tried getting behind trees and before them, behind logs and lying down in brush-piles—in fact, almost every way, but the one for which I here express preference has given best results. The hunter ought to be *well hid*, and *keep hid*, when he is calling. He ought to get his gun to his face as soon as a turkey is in sight, for the slightest movement is almost sure to be seen after he gets near. I have lost many a gobbler by not adhering strictly to this rule. I remember, once, calling up an old gobbler for a friend, and, when about thirty yards from us, he tried to shoot; but the gobbler stepped behind a tree, and did not show himself plainly until he had

moved about ten feet. This necessitated moving the gun a little—something that ought to have been done while he was moving and out of sight—which movement was at once caught by the keen-eyed fowl, and he was off like a flash. We were as well hid as it is possible to be, and the morning was cloudy, so there was no glittering of the sun on the barrels. The only thing he could see was the movement of the gun. I made my friend fix himself as before in the blind, and I went to where the turkey was when he took fright; and I could not see anything except the barrel of his rifle.

Ordinarily, if gobblers have no hens with them, and have not grown smart by experience with human deceptions, they are easily called up by an expert; and sometimes the hunter will be able to call hens and gobblers up together, in which case the former will always be in advance of the latter, so that, if he has his heart set on a gobbler, he must either make a long shot, or let the hens pass on by him. In such cases, he must be well hid, and keep very still.

A party of ladies and gentlemen were camping on Little River, Texas, fishing and hunting. It was a jolly, lively company of cultivated, refined persons, who had met there for a week of wildwood enjoyment; and they got all there was to get, for they knew how. My wife had gone out with them at first, and I joined them about three days afterward. Soon after my arrival, the welcome information was imparted that there was a very smart old gobbler in the neighborhood that could not be fooled by any human device. Several of the party had tried him, only to fail; and, though he gobbled every morning, it was never until he had left his roost. A meeting was held, and a solemn resolution was passed, to the effect that that turkey was a nuisance, and that I be appointed to abate it forthwith, under penalty of ban-

ishment from camp in case of failure—two days being allowed in which to accomplish it.

Before sunrise next morning I was seated on a log, half a mile from camp, anxiously waiting for Mr. Gobbler to open the game at which he and I were to play. It was a lovely spring morning. The violets and the daisies had, ere this, breathed out their sweet lives; the "red buds," that erstwhile wreathed with pinkish blossoms every branch of the dark, polished iron-wood trees, had all fallen, faded and limp, to the earth in showers of sweetness, and, in the dim morning light, looked like rose-leaves on the floor of a deserted banquet-hall. The heavy, humid air still retained a faint odor of the dying wild-plum blossoms, while the snowy dogwood flowers were busily breaking their buds into bloom, bridal-wreathing the gladsome spring. A magnificent trumpet-vine, right over me, clinging to a dead tree, and enwrapping itself around and about it, embowering it in a shaft of living green, reaching skyward, reminds me of Wirt's beautiful words about the vine and the oak—the wife, and the broken, discouraged husband. The time of its flowers, grand carnation trumpets, is not yet. Delicate silvery-green leaves are struggling into form and dimension on elm, and oak, and blackberry, and alder, while, here and there, a greenbrier-vine unfolds its broad young leaves, ruddy with vigor, and lovely with blushing beauty, not unlike delicate-tinted Venetian gloss. The woods teem with life, and a thousand wildwood voices are heard, from the scarlet songster right in front of me, sending forth every few moments his praiseful "tube, tube, tube," as he sits on topmost twig of a tall elm, whose gracefully rounded and upreaching bowers make for him a throne, silvery-sheeny in the first rays of the morning sun, to the blue-backed, white-breasted chorister—whose name I never

knew—hopping from twig to twig, always followed by his less handsome mate, wooed continuously after him by his clear, musical "chick-'twill-a-wee." A stick cracks to my right, and the sharp sound shoots into me like an arrow, causing me to start suddenly. What a sight greets my vision! There are three deer leisurely walking past me, and I instinctively grasp my rifle, and begin to raise it. No, no; they are does heavy with young, so I remain perfectly still, as they, in absolute fearlessness, ramble slowly by, stopping to examine some suspicious-looking stump, or to listen to some unusual sound, or to nibble the dainty buds of some vine or bush. So they wander on, passing within twenty yards of me, never looking at me once; and the last I see of them is the swish of one's tail, as it signals its movement onward. Graceful, innocent creatures! How can we hunters have the heart to kill you? But we have, sometimes.

Humph! my right leg has become benumbed, sitting so long and so still in one position, and I rise up to work it about, to start the circulation. I wonder if my gobbler has not taken fright by my happening to pass near him as I walked through the dark woods to this place; or, if some other hunter has not disturbed him; or, if my friends at camp have not played a trick on me, there being no gobbler at all in these woods.

The sun is now well up, and is climbing higher and higher, driving away all duskiness, spangling the polished leaves of greenbrier and haw with a thousand miniature suns, and making the grass at my feet fairly dazzling with diamonds of dew.

"Ah, there he is!" It is spoken quickly and audibly. My heart beats harder and quicker. The object of my search is in 200 yards of me. Standing like a statue, I listen with that intensity peculiar to the hunter

and the startled deer. Again the interesting sound is borne to my ears; but I wait. He gobbles again and again. He has not moved since he first gobbled; certainly not far. "I'll try him, right here." If he were moving, I would try to work in ahead of him: but he isn't. There is a big tree-top, several years fallen, that offers a very good hiding place, and, after placing a few chunks and a green bush or two in necessary places, I step into this hastily constructed blind, plucking a young hawleaf from a convenient bush. This is adjusted to my lip, and I wait for him to gobble. The instant he does, I give two or three yelps, short and smothered, just loud enough to be heard by him. He vigorously gobbles twice in quick succession, so I know he has heard me. His strutting is more frequent and louder than before. Again and again he gobbles, but gets no nearer. I wish he gobbled less. His frequent gobbling is not a good indication, for it tells me that he is not going to be in a hurry about drawing nearer, and that he is going to do his best to woo the yelper to him. He hasn't drawn an inch nearer. In about ten minutes, I yelp again, about as at first. Again he gobbles and struts, but does not move. I know exactly how far he is, and that he can't see me if I move, and so I get out of my blind, after about ten minutes, and walk quickly, but noiselessly, about 100 yards to the left, getting no farther from the turkey, and get into a hiding-place of bushes. As soon as he gobbles, I yelp again, and he answers quickly. The yelping has been faultless, and I know he is not alarmed at any bad note. My object in moving was to make him think that the hen was feeding along, and not going to him. To stay in one place all the time is not hen-like, and any sharp gobbler knows it. Ordinarily, it is best to stay in one place, but when dealing with an "educated" gobbler, it is often best to move occasionally, especially

early in the morning. He gobbles and struts right along, but gets no nearer. Soon everything is quiet, and I know he is moving, but which way I can not tell, and so keep my eyes busy, and my gun in a convenient position. The swish of a squirrel's tail, seventy yards from me, causes me to start my gun to my face; but the mistake is detected instantly. I hear him strut, and know he is nearer, but can't locate him. I give an easy yelp, and he instantly gobbles, squarely off to my left, not over 100 yards away. Quietly turning to face him, I watch, in the hope that he may circle near enough for a shot; but he doesn't, and the next I hear of him is when he gobbles, about the same distance away, and exactly to my left. If I had not turned, he would now be behind me. Keeping my front to him, a close watch is kept up, and developments are awaited. Here he stops, gobbles, and struts for fifteen minutes, while I yelp just a very little. Now he strikes off down the Bottom, going to my left still, but going straight; every few minutes he gobbles, so that I can course him exactly. Believing that he will swing round farther to my left, and keep an ear in my direction, I cast off to his left, leaving him on my right, and travel fast until I am a little ahead of him. He gobbles a good deal, which convinces me that he is still hopeful of results from the yelping he has heard. All at once, I come to an open glade, about 100 yards long and sixty wide, in the edge of which there is a small, thick cluster of bushes, exactly suited to my purpose, and in the very center of this I squat flat down on the ground. "I can make him show himself here, sure," is the confident thought in my mind. He is not more than 200 yards away, when a few low yelps are given with a green-brier leaf, to which he makes no response except to strut. In about five minutes, he gobbles low, to which I respond at once, and he gobbles again. Two

or three minutes elapse, when he gobbles—a sort of chuckle—much nearer than before. A couple of very low, short yelps are given, and I drop the leaf from my fingers, cock my rifle, raise it to my face, resting both elbows on my knees, for I am confident he is going to pass in sight somewhere along the glade, my expectation being that he will show up opposite me, on the other side. Not a strut or a gobble is heard, and I know he is moving slowly and carefully. The silence heightens the intensity of my feelings; my nerves are strung to tightest tension; nothing could escape my eye now. In about two minutes — ten, it seems — I catch a glimpse of his white head across the glade in the bushes; it is held perfectly still for a moment, and, as it moves, there comes gliding from the bushes, easily as oil, noiselessly as a spirit, shyly as modesty undressed—the very embodiment of suspicion and wariness—the glossy form of this wily knight of the forest. Before he reaches the glade, he stops and stands erect, his neck stretched high, his head turned to one side in listening attitude, his feathers pressed close like mail of steel; and, as he stands, he looks as though he could dissolve from view in the twinkling of an eye. I know that he has come just to take a peep out into the glade, and that no time is to be lost. There is a quick but steady glance along the barrel, and the silver bead freezes in the notch of the rear sight, and settles, with the steadiness and fixedness of a ton weight, right on the center line of his body, just above the point of the breast-bone, when instantly the hair-trigger is touched, followed by the murderous crash of the report, and a quick vision of flying feathers, right and left, outspread wings, and head thrown convulsively back. Springing instantly up, I go to him at once, stepping the distance, which is exactly sixty-nine steps. He seemed to have been paralyzed by the shot, so, when I reached him, I saw

THE BIG GOBBLER.

only a slight tremor of his wings and one dying gasp. In all my experience, but a very few times have I ever seen a turkey killed so very dead. Without touching him, I stood close by and looked at this splendid fowl. He lay upon his breast, slightly turned to one side; his legs stretched straight behind him, as he fell forward; his wings were about half-spread, the white spots glistering in the bright light; his tail, so perfect of feather and rich, of dark, rich russet, was partly spread, and lay gently touching the ground; his neck, with a very life-like curve, lay prone upon the earth, while his head lay on one side, showing an eye half-closed, and his mouth partly open, with a few drops of blood about his tongue.

Gathering him up carefully, I went to camp as fast as possible, exulting over my skill, and eagerly anticipating the warm congratulations awaiting me, in which I was not disappointed. A bright little woman, with blue eyes and auburn hair, triumphantly said: "I knew my husband would bring him." He weighed twenty-four pounds, and was a most splendid fowl every way. The next day we had him for dinner, cooked to perfection, and a vote of thanks was tendered me.

A favorite way of hunting turkeys, with many sportsmen, is to *roost* them, and shoot as many as they can before it becomes too dark, and then call them the next morning. A good hunter will hardly ever fail to get several shots in the morning, after they have been scattered the evening before. Many points could here be given on roosting turkeys, but the limits of this article forbid; and so I give an experience.

In the month of February, several years ago, two friends and myself camp on Cedar Creek, Burleson County, Texas, for the purpose of turkey-hunting; and, as we wish to roost them, each goes in a different direction—"every fellow for himself." After half an hour

spent in the creek bottom, I have made the discovery that the turkeys are not feeding there, and so I go to the hills, where, by numerous fresh scratchings, as well as tracks in the soft earth, it becomes evident that they are ranging. The fact is plain to me that, while they range in the hills during the day, they go to the bottom to roost at night, as the tracks next to the bottom are all seen to have been made going and coming, and it is their custom to roost in the bottoms at this season. After looking around among the hills for an hour, a descent is made into the bottom, where, from observations carefully made, it seems most likely turkeys may roost. This is a place where the creek comes squarely against the hills, forming a horseshoe bend, in which there is a shallow pond, of perhaps five acres, full of tall trees, many of them being pecans. Turkeys are fond of roosting over water, when they can find good trees.

Finding a large tree-top, broken off during the summer, and now retaining its dead leaves, I slip into it, and happily find it to be a splendid blind, well located, as it is, between the pond and the creek, at a point where the distance between them is about sixty yards. Across the creek, the hills rise abruptly, furnishing a good place for the turkeys to take wing when they go to roost. Having found some smart-weed leaves growing in a protected, sunny spot on the edge of the pond—though spring has not yet begun to show any indications of being near—a few are gathered for callers. The sun is about half an hour high, when I hide in my blind, and make myself comfortable. As a general thing, turkeys are very easily drawn to a good roosting-place by yelping, especially if the hunter begin before they have decided to go to any particular place. A few long, whining yelps are given, as nearly like the notes of an old hen as possible. No response; it was hardly expected, my purpose being

to notify turkeys in hearing that this place was going to be occupied to-night by some of their friends. In about ten minutes, a few more yelps are given, and at once a hen out in the hills responds with a few lively yelps, which say: "Never mind; we will soon be there, too." I yelp a few times more, in a low, careless sort of way, and then drop my leaf, as I feel sure it will not have to be used again. Pretty soon, turkeys are heard scratching in the leaves on the hill-side, and occasionally yelping in a low, muffled tone. The hunter is now confident of his game, and, patiently and contentedly, waits. A gray squirrel playfully interviews him, and then goes away. A couple of wood-ducks swim along the edge of the pond, within thirty feet of their dangerous foe, unconcerned, and busily engaged in their evening meal. The fiery eyes and silky green crest of the male well become him—this gallant knight of the woody ponds and creeks. A buzzard sails lazily, easily past, and lightly drops on the jagged limb of a dead tree standing out in the pond, and is soon joined by several others. "A good omen," I say. I am not superstitious, but I have often observed that turkeys frequently roost near buzzards. It is very still, so still that a wagon on the road, half a mile below, seems to be within a quarter, and the whir of a sparrow's wings can be heard seventy yards or more. The last gleam of the sun on the ashy limbs of the forest-trees has faded away; dusk comes on apace; the air grows chilly; the chirping of the birds ceases; and the last gray squirrel has slipped into his hole for the night, bidding me adieu with a few graceful swishes of his beautiful tail. I am alone, and lonesome. There isn't a sound to be heard, except the rippling of water going over a log in the creek and the far-off lowing of some cattle coming into the bottom to spend the night. Suddenly is heard the welcome *whiff! whiff!*

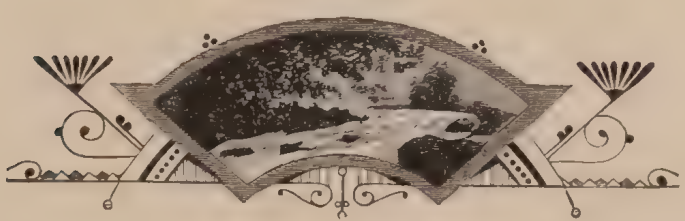
whiff! of a turkey's wings, as it rises on the hill-side, and comes past me into a tree not forty yards away, on the edge of the pond. It is a hen turkey, and wears a beard. She turns her head about, and carefully looks in every direction, to see if anything dangerous can be discovered. Here comes another; but this one goes on, and lights near the buzzards. Soon a dozen or more have gone to roost, but not an old gobbler has yet been heard. The hunter waits; for, while two fine hens and a young gobbler are in easy reach of his shot-gun, the time has not yet come for work, it not being dark enough; and then he wants to see if some old gobblers are not coming, too. They nearly always are later than the hens about going to roost—very like the male of the "genus homo" in these degenerate days. Ah, there's a gobbler! His heavy flight can not be mistaken; he can not be seen, but he is marked, nevertheless, and is not 100 yards up the creek. Sakes alive! Here comes one right at me, passing so near that I instinctively duck my head, though he passed thirty feet over me. In a big pecan-tree, twenty steps away, he stops—on the very scaffold of death. *He is mine.* Two others are heard above, in the creek, and then all is quiet again. From his secure hiding-place, the hunter contentedly watches his game, and plans the assault, while he waits for the darkness to deepen. There they stand, their feathers hanging loosely, indicating that they are not alarmed one bit; but they peer about, dropping their heads below the line of their bodies, until at last, one by one, they ease themselves down upon their perches, their tails hanging almost straight down; and then they look to be satisfied that all is well for one more night. Alas for them! how often security is only fancied! It is now dark enough—so dark that a man can not be distinguished from a tree thirty yards; but above it is light

enough to easily see a turkey's head against the sky. The trusty double-barrel, loaded with 6's in the left and 00's in the right, is cocked, and the hunter slowly rises to his feet, to bring death and confusion into that flock of turkeys. On rising, a very little noise is made, and the old gobbler that flew so near me when going to roost stretches his long neck, and looks about suspiciously. The gun comes to the face, and, as the head is seen just above the barrel, the trigger is pulled, and a load of 6's crashes through his head and neck, making him tumble out limp and lifeless. Before he strikes the ground, and while a hen near by is rushing on the wings of fear from out a tree to my left, the faithful old gun glides in just ahead, and, as its bang breaks upon the confusion, she folds her wings, and strikes the water with a mighty splash. Turkeys, alarmed at the firing, are now flying in almost every direction, and by the time I have loaded my gun not one is in sight. It is growing darker fast. Gliding along near the edge of the pond, I carefully look in every tree, to see if some one of the many has not had temerity enough to remain on its roost, and, after going about 100 yards, make the glad discovery that two in one tree remain; but they are out in the pond so far that I must wade in—something willingly done, though the water is cold and rubbers are absent. Against the sky, their long necks can be seen moving suspiciously, and the decision is made that it will not be best to try to get close, and I fire away at one with 00's, only to badly cripple it, and lose it in the darkness, though I found it the next morning, and carried it home, it having fallen about 100 yards out in the bottom. Gathering up the two previously killed, I go up the creek toward camp, all the way closely watching in the trees against the western sky, where linger yet the dying beams of daylight. I know there are some gobblers somewhere near,

for I did not hear them fly at the firing. Before I have gone 150 yards, a fine fellow is seen clearly outlined against the western sky, and plenty near for a good kill; and it is made with 6's. The load is too heavy to carry, and so, after drawing the turkeys, they are hung in a tree, far out on a swinging limb, and high enough to be secure from wild animals.

On arriving at camp, my companions report two turkeys to one gun; nothing to the other. A good supper, hunting-yarns, and some plans for the morrow, are all properly attended to, and we sleep soundly. Early next morning we are out, I taking with me my friend, who came empty-handed to supper, for whom I call up, of the flock scattered the evening before, two turkeys which he bags and two which he misses. I bag two myself. Our other friend brings in one. Eleven in all! It does not always turn out so well. Is there anything in luck?

It is with reluctance that these lines are brought to a close, for the writer is conscious that the half has not been told; and, writing hastily, as he has been compelled to do, under many pressing duties, he feels sure that he has not properly accomplished his task, though he has filled his allotted space.



CONCERNING POINTERS AND SETTERS.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY JNO. M. TRACY.

IN choosing a dog for upland shooting, the American sportsman must beware of the influence of European taste and opinion which pervades sporting literature, and, while good for Europeans on their own ground, is utterly misleading in America. In Europe, game is so preserved and protected that birds are very abundant; land-holdings are comparatively small, save the estates of the nobility, covert is sparse, and trespass on another's ground is not to be thought of. It follows that a slow, cautious dog is needed, one that can be relied on to cover every inch of his master's little preserve, and nose out all the birds, without dashing off into neighboring fields and getting into trouble with jealous game-keepers.

Here all is different. The farms are large, covert is exceedingly dense, restrictions as to trespass on private property are quite rare, and may generally be removed by a polite word. Game, also, is less abundant, save in exceptional localities.

We therefore need a fast dog, who can cover a great deal of ground, high-spirited and dashing, with plenty of intelligence to think and judge of the ground he works over, and go to the likely places without losing time in useless "quartering." A tough, wiry, hardy fellow he must be, able to endure heat, not afraid of briers, and staunch to the last degree when birds are found. At the same time, the greatest delicacy of nose is required to

locate birds in thick weeds in our dry, scent-killing atmosphere.

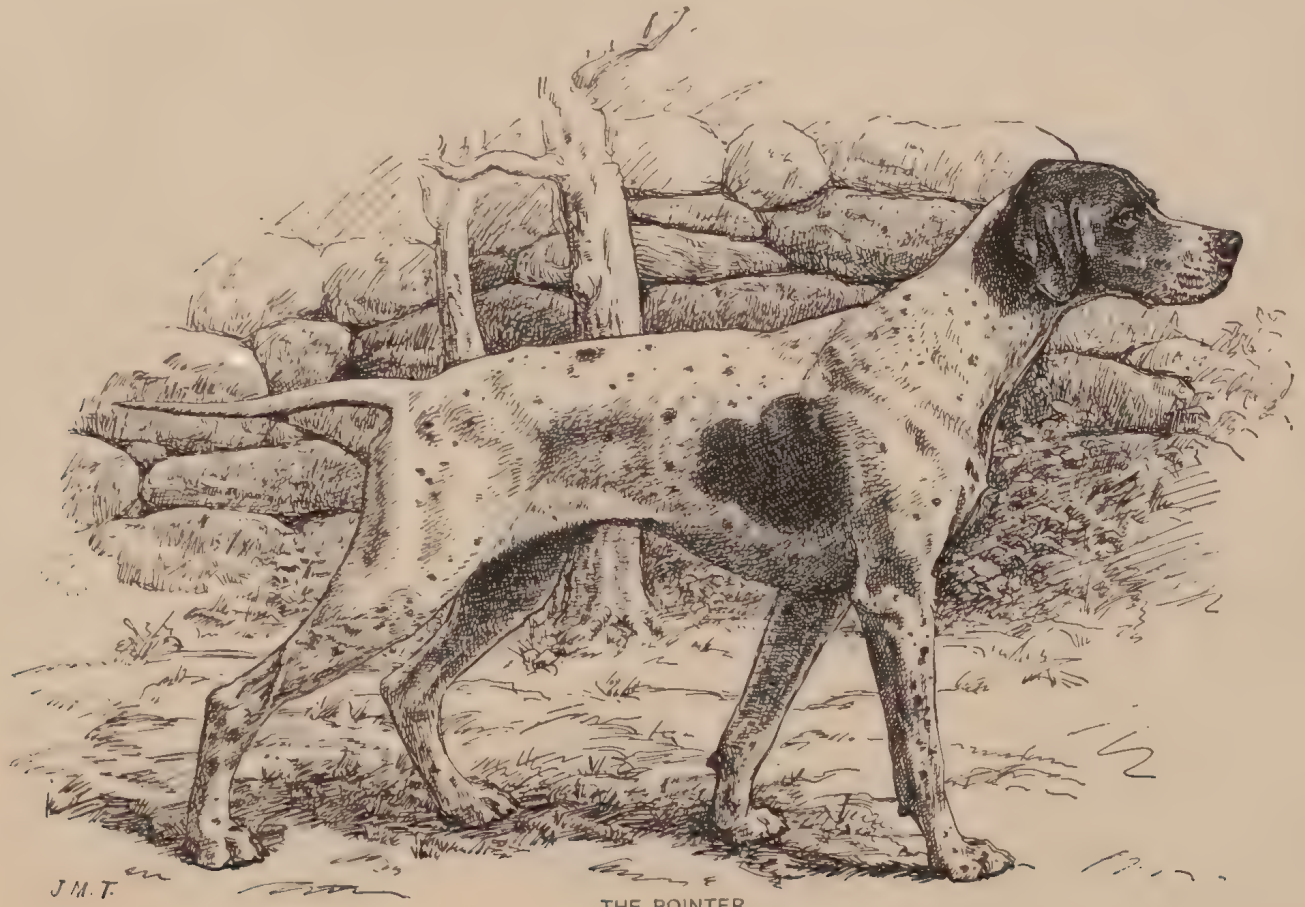
We have not here the immense hares that dogs in Continental Europe are required to retrieve, nor the chance of a wounded roebuck to pull down, or a wild boar to bring to bay, so we need no such great weight or power as is required in France and in Germany.

Our dog must be as small and light as is consistent with speed and endurance. We need a portable dog to take in the buggy or on the cars, on trips to distant hunting-grounds. Such gad-abouts as we Americans can not afford to be burdened with any surplus weight.

My personal experience leads me to differ most positively from many good sportsmen and able writers regarding the value of high breeding in dogs. "Blood will tell" is my doctrine. Since 1852, when I first began acquaintance with field dogs, I have seen many a scrub and mongrel who would work fairly well—some few, indeed, that could be classed as very "killing" dogs—but never one that could compare, even for pot-hunting, let alone style, with blue-blood pointers or Llewellyn setters of the field-trial kind.

It has been my privilege, since the establishment of trials, not only to see a good deal of the running, but to work many of the winners in private, as well as to own and train highly-bred puppies for my own use; and I must say that the worst of all these was far better than the best mongrel I have ever seen. I regard the meritorious scrub as a highly improbable possibility, while the good blue-blood is an every-day occurrence.

The great trouble with highly bred dogs is, that few owners take the precaution to begin training by bringing their dogs into complete and willing general obedience, but put them on game too soon, and let them in an uncontrolled state form a habit of yielding to excitement.



THE POINTER.

It should be remembered that a dog hunts and points by natural instinct, and only needs to be trained to adjust his movements to those of his master.

With only such training as is needed to make any kind of dog fit for a companion or guard, your pointer or setter becomes a useful ally in the field.

I would rather pay a trainer $100 to teach my pup to come quickly when called, stop instantly when ordered, and walk quietly at heel, than to get him "well broken" (as the thing is usually done) "free of charge, and a chromo thrown in."

HINTS ON AMATEUR TRAINING.

While not pretending to rival the instructions given by Waters, Hammond, and other eminent trainers, I can assure the sportsman that, if he has the gift to handle a dog at all, he can, by following the ensuing few directions, bring a green puppy into sufficient training to be useful in the field in a week's time, with not very long daily lessons.

The same system, with a little more vigorous use of the spike-collar, will do for bringing a recalcitrant old dog to a sense of his duty.

Begin by teaching your dog to come, to go, and to stop at command. Have a stout check-cord sixty or eighty feet long, and tie both ends to his collar - a spike-collar with blunt points, if the animal is so self-willed as to require punishment. This will subdue without terrifying him out of his senses, as a whip does.

Plant a smooth, round stake in the ground (a broom or hoe handle will do), and pass the cord over it. Now take a position as far from the stake as the cord will allow, holding the latter loosely in your hand. The dog can now come and go easily, the cord running around the stake as through a pulley; and you can pull him in either

direction, at will, when he does not obey commands. You should have a good many small pieces of meat at hand, to serve as rewards of merit. Now tell him, "Come here," and if he obeys, praise him and give him a taste of meat. If he does not, pull him to you by the cord and soothe him a little, to show that you mean him no harm. Then say "hie on," and wave him gently away with your hand. He will probably not understand this, so by pulling on the other side of the cord you draw him slowly out toward the stake, repeating the command a couple of times as you do so. When he has gone far enough, you call "to-ho," and stop him by the cord. Holding both strands taut, so that he can not move, go up to him and pet him a little; then return to your place, and repeat the performance. Give your commands in an ordinary tone of voice, and do not repeat more than twice before enforcing compliance by means of the cord. Be exact about this, as it insures promptness. Keep your temper, be kind, but firm, and reward every symptom of voluntary obedience with a piece of meat. Let the lessons be short, but as frequent as possible. Give each lesson on different ground, and change your position with reference to the stake very frequently during the lesson.

When he has learned to obey the commands without any pull on the cord, take him away from the stake, but leave the cord on him for awhile; then gradually dispense with it, but have it handy, so that you can clap it on him if needed.

Absolute perfection in stopping at the word "to-ho," and remaining motionless until ordered on, is the key to field work, so you must give extra lessons on this. Throw down a little piece of meat, and let him approach within a few feet of it; say "to-ho," and stop him with the check-cord. Make him stand rigidly in place. If he moves, put him back in the same position, and repeat

"to-ho." If he moves his head or foot, put it back exactly as it was. He must not even wag his tail. At every sign of movement, check it with the hand, and repeat "to-ho." When he has been perfectly still for a few seconds, say "hie on," and let him take the meat. As he becomes more perfect in the exercise, try him without meat, rewarding his obedience with praise and caresses. Finally, exercise him without the cord; he will be perfect in a few days, but you should watch for opportunities to make him "to-ho" under circumstances of great excitement, such as the presence of strange dogs or of people he does not like.

Your dog being now thoroughly under control, it is time to acquaint him with game. Take him out in the field, put him through all his lessons, and allow him to run awhile, until his first exuberance at the outing is over. Then take him to a place where you are confident of finding birds—quail preferably. Let him work at will on the scent until he locates them for himself. He will probably point them; if so, let him stand two or three minutes, checking every symptom of restlessness by the word "to-ho." When you have seen that he is really settled on a steady point, walk up and flush the birds, keeping your eye on him all the while, to check any disposition to move with your advance or at the rise of the birds. Should he move, put him right back in the same place, and settle him again into a rigid position. This putting back into place is of the very greatest importance. Above all, don't shoot, no matter how well he does, until you have seen him steady on several points and flushes. If he seems deficient in pointing instinct, or tries to work in too near, and flushes birds, you must stop him with "to-ho" when you see by his actions that scent is very hot; and in every case stop him for a couple of minutes at all accidental flushes. He will soon point staunchly.

When he has found and pointed a few times, and become steady at the rise, begin to shoot, using at first wood-powder; but on no account must you shoot at a bevy rise until several singles have been killed over him. The excitement of such a powerful scent, and the roar of so many wings, with the added crack of a gun, is too much for the high-strung nerves of a thorough-bred; and you are liable to make your puppy gun-shy, *even though he has been fully accustomed to the gun by presence at target-shooting, etc.*

Begin by shooting only at well-pointed singles. Keep the dog still for a minute or so after firing; then make him find and point the dead bird, but do not allow him to retrieve. Pick it up carefully, and allow him to smell but not to mouth it, and show him that you handle it with care. When you see that he is steady on singles, you may shoot at bevies. Do not shoot at any accidental flushes until he is thoroughly trained and steady in his work. When punishment is necessary, do not call the dog in to receive it, but making him "to-ho" at some distance from you, walk up and take him by the collar. If you proceed otherwise, he will learn to run away to avoid punishment. To control his motions in the field, call his attention, and wave your hand in the direction you wish him to go, and start that way yourself; but it is best to let him work the ground in his own way as much as possible, so as to exercise his judgment about likely places. In using the whistle, it is best to adopt a system of calls; say a single short blast for calling attention, and two longer repeated blasts for him to come in. You can begin the whistle instruction at the end of the check-cord and stake course mentioned above.

If your dog is gun-shy, get rid of him, unless you see that he has remarkable qualities otherwise. In that case, take him out hunting frequently, and have him find and

point birds, taking especial care to make him steady at the rise; but do not shoot until his passion for the sport has become very strong; then you can begin on singles, using wood-powder. Your only chance of failure is in commencing to shoot too soon. If you have a perfectly staunch dog to take with him, so much the better.

Yard lessons in retrieving may begin as soon as "to-ho" has been mastered. Use any soft object, such as a roll of cloth or a leather glove. Show this to him; say "fetch," and put it gently in his mouth; make him hold it an instant, and then take it away, saying "give." You can gradually take a step or two away as he holds it, and draw him to you with the check cord, repeating all the time, "fetch." He will soon take it from your hand, hold it, and bring it to you, at command. Then you have to lay it on the ground and make him pick it up. He may be induced to do this by blowing or spitting on it, and waving it to excite his interest, before you throw it down; or you may have to take his nose in your hands, bring it down to the object, open and close his mouth upon it, using force, but quietly and gently. All severity is worse than wasted. Patience, firmness, and gentleness will insure success *in every case*. I have tried severe force systems without success, but on the above plan have never failed. Remember that lessons must be short; so do not try to do too much at once. From the first, accustom the dog to remain quiet while the object is being put or thrown down for him, and to go out for it only at the word "fetch."

When you begin to let your dog retrieve birds, he must be sent for such only as are cleanly killed. Cripples may be tried when he has had more experience. When he has become very fond of retrieving, he will probably begin to pinch the birds. To cure this, take him by the lower jaw and ram the mangled bird down his throat until

it nearly chokes him, twisting and turning it about, hurting his mouth, filling it full of feathers, and making the whole performance very disagreeable to him. Throw the bird down before him, and do not allow him to go near it. You must make him understand that the bird is spoiled. A few repetitions of this will cure the fault. Never allow him to go for a dead bird until ordered, and on no account take him out with an unsteady dog.

By all means teach him to walk at heel. Any pains you may take to attain this object will be amply repaid in the increased comfort you will have in his company. Carry a little switch or cane. Call the dog in and put him behind you, repeating the word "heel." Walk on slowly, and if he does not follow, call him, and if he attempts to pass you, motion him back with the switch, or tap him lightly with it, if necessary. Exercise him in this every time you take him out for a run. If I could make and enforce a dog law, its first provision would be that no person should be allowed to keep a dog that was not perfectly obedient to the commands "come here," "to-ho," and "heel." With one ill-trained in these respects, the best-intentioned master is not able to prevent his dog from injuring persons or stock, if so inclined.

To teach him to lie down at command, first say "to ho," then go up to him, and repeating the command "down charge" in a quiet tone of voice, take him by the collar, put one hand on his withers, and push him downward and backward until you force him to the ground. Be sure to push backward as well as downward, otherwise you might injure him. Make him lie still, with fore legs extended to the front and hind legs well drawn under. Do not allow him to turn on his side. A moderate use of the whip is useful in this lesson, if the dog is stubborn. For this one purpose it is better than the spike-collar.

THE POINTER.

My favorite dog for upland shooting is the pointer; yet I can not claim for him any superiority over the setter, save that his coat does not gather burrs. Other claims that are urged seem to me without foundation; and my preference is founded solely on the pleasure I take in watching the play of the muscles unhidden by long hair.

The breed is very ancient. As far back as we can trace it, through descriptions by writers and by old pictures, we find that it has not changed in the least in form, size, color, or habits. In certain localities where special work was required, varieties have been developed by outcrossing to other breeds and by selection; but as regards the breed in general, there has been no change. As to its origin, nothing is known. Italy, Spain, France, and England have in succession excelled in its production, as each has for the time led the taste of the world in sport.

Regarding the notion of a hound origin, that theory was framed when natural science was less advanced than now, and nothing has been proved to support it. For all we know, it is quite as likely that the hound is derived from the pointer.

But we do know, to our sorrow, that there have been hound crosses which have greatly injured the pointer in speed, staunchness, and obedience. Generations of careful breeding and inbreeding have been required to bring him back to his old-time quality, which we are now beginning to reach in the best strains.

Under careful breeding for field use, the pointer, wherever found, tends to assume a certain type, which I will now describe:

The pointer should weigh from fifty to sixty pounds, though good ones are often of greater or less weight. (I must here correct an almost universal error regarding the Spanish pointer's weight, which was not anywhere

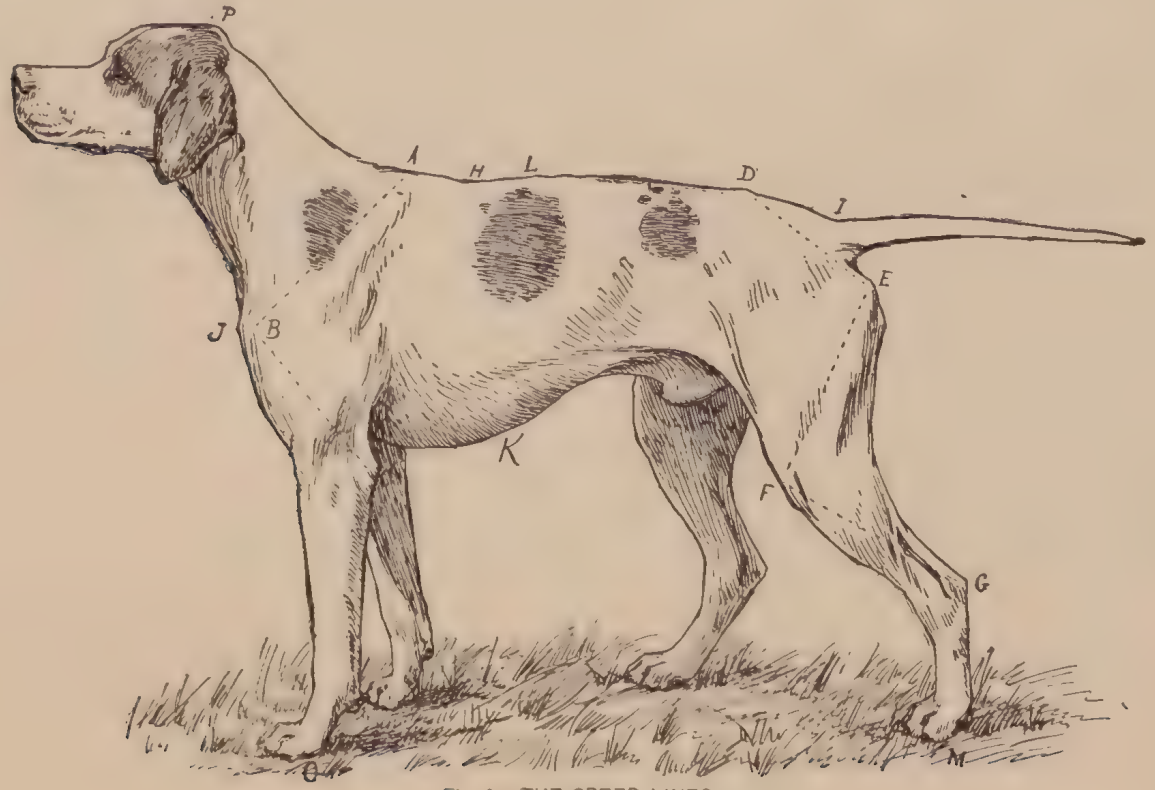


Fig. 1.—THE SPEED LINES.

near so great as is usually supposed; not above that of the heavy-weight dogs now common in our shows.) In color he may be white, with liver, lemon, orange, or black spots; or he may be solid white, black, or liver. Liver and white and lemon and white are now the favorite colors. His general appearance gives the impression of a bold, frank, dashing dog, carrying his head high, and having his shoulders quite above the level of his quarters, thus giving a decided slope to the line of his back.

He should be bony and rugged in form. Smoothly pretty dogs are sometimes good, but should be distrusted.

In detail, the description is as follows, with scale of points adapted from Stonehenge, but with valuations further subdivided for the more easy use of amateurs:

The general aspect of the head must be lean and bony. The skull (ten points) should be of good size, wider between the ears than that of the setter, with forehead rising well at the brows. There must be a well-developed occipital protuberance (P. 385, Fig. 1), and the upper surface must be in two slightly rounded flats, with a furrow between. The nose (ten points) should be long (about 4½ inches) and broad, with widely open nostrils. The end must be moist and cool to the touch. Its color should be black or dark brown, but in lemon and white dogs may be of a deep flesh-color. It should be cut off square, and not pointed; teeth meeting evenly. An upper jaw projecting far over the lower is called "snipey" (Fig. 3), and is a grave defect, which superficial judges confound with lack of lip, which is a trifling defect. Ears (1½ points) soft in coat, moderately long, and thin in leather, set on low, and flat to the cheeks, without any tendency to prick. Eyes (1½ points) soft, and of medium size, brown in color, varying in shade according to that of the coat. Lips (one point) sufficiently developed to give a square appearance to the muzzle, but not

pendulous, like those of the hound. The neck (six points) should be arched toward the head, long and round, without dewlap or "throatiness" (Fig. 2). The shoulders (seven points) should slope backward, like those of a race-horse, and be strongly muscled and very

Fig. 2.—"THROATY."

Fig. 3.—"SNIPEY."

loosely set on, so as to have perfect freedom of action. The chest (eight points) must be deep and narrow, with breast-bone sloping rapidly upward in front. Behind the shoulders the ribs should gradually spring to greater width with extreme fullness well back where it will not interfere with shoulder action (Fig. 4, A B). The back ribs should also be deep to give room for well-developed internal organs. The back (seven points) should present the general outline of a low arch, sprung

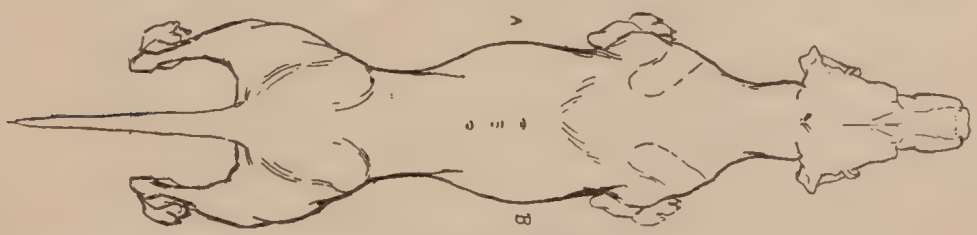


Fig. 4.—TOP VIEW.

from a point as close behind the shoulders as possible. and extending to the root of the tail, the curvature being somewhat lessened toward the hips, whence it droops slightly to the quarters. The loin should be full of muscle, running well up on the back ribs, but must

not be so heavy as to lose its suppleness. The hips should be wide and bony, with pronounced angles.

The quarters (five points) should be powerfully muscled, but their best quality is indicated by width rather than thickness of the ham. Thick, showy hams indicate great development of certain muscles little used in the work of running, while the wide ham indicates the development of those most needed. The after-part of the ham should seem to reach low down on the "second thigh" (Fig. 5, A). The stifles (three points) should be let down low by great length of femur (thigh-bone); must be well bent, and carried widely apart, so as to allow the legs to be reached well forward in the gallop, giving a long stride. The bend of stifle comes from the length of femur and the dog's habit of hunting with head up, to feel for the body scent; whereas a fast hound must also have a long femur, without which his action would be weak, but from his habit of carrying his head low he stands high behind and has a straight stifle. Legs (four points) must be straight; should have good strength of bone in both shanks and joints, and the "second thigh" should be well muscled (Fig. 5, A). The elbows (three points) must be let down as far as possible, and should be turned neither out nor in—the former being the lesser fault. They should be very loose and free in their action, not closely bound to the side. The hocks (three points) should be strong, bony, and very firm against flex-

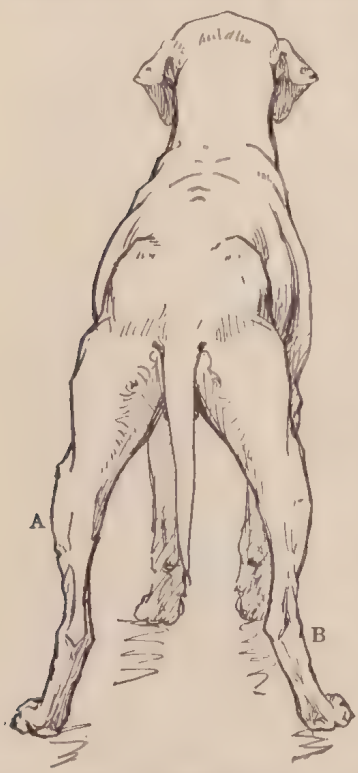


Fig. 5.—REAR VIEW.

ion to the rear. They should be slightly turned in, or "cow-hocked," a formation necessarily accompanying the out-turned stifle (Fig. 5, B). The pasterns (two points) should be short, nearly but not quite upright, and sufficiently strong in bone. The feet (eight points) should have strong, well-arched toes, set close together, with hard, horny pads beneath. Strength and arch of toe and hardness of pads are for work; closeness of toes, for beauty rather than for use.

The tail (five points) must be strong in bone at the root, but diminish as it leaves the body, and gradually taper to a point. It should be carried a little above the line of the back, without any tendency to curl at the tip. Symmetry and quality (seven points) involve what is usually expressed by the word style, as well as a generally high and well-balanced endowment of the essential features of the breed. As an indication of good breeding, this is a very important count in selecting a pointer.

The coat (three points) should be soft to the eye, but hard and dense to the touch. The color (five points) admits of great variety, as above stated, but should be bright and clear, with distinct markings. (Total—100 points.)

The "speed lines," so called, are identical in both pointers and setters. While their possession is the proof of great merit, one should not accept an animal for breeding purposes that does not also possess in a high degree the distinctive characteristics of the breed. Beware of hound-like or greyhound-like pointers, or of setters with spaniel or collie appearances about them. In regard to strength of limbs, that depends not on bulk of bone so much as on good articulation. Short and square joints are weak, no matter how much bone. Good joints should reach far up and down the limb, while their

points of junction with the shank on one side of the joint should be much higher or lower than on the other, but never squarely opposite (as A B and C D, Fig. 6). On one side of the limb, a good joint will seem to reach far up, and on the other side far down it.

Pay great attention to this, as it has much to do with soundness and endurance. The speed lines require (Fig. 1) A B long and sloping (can be tested by touch better than by sight), B C, D E, E F, and F G as long as possible. A good arch of back, I H, with point H as far forward as possible. Great depth from L to K. G M and N O quite short. Line of breast-bone from K to J sloping rapidly upward (Fig. 1). This analysis of the lines applies to all the setters as well as pointers. The pointer has been used for illustrations of these points, because his hair does not obscure the form.

Fig. 6.—FRONT VIEW.

I will also explain that for my illustrations I have preferred to take from my portfolio exact drawings of dogs of known merit, without idealizing any features to give what I conceive to be ultimate perfection in any part. I think it better to familiarize the eye with such degrees of merit as are often to be met, rather than with ideals that might never be realized.

In considering the action of pointers and setters, we must keep in view the fact that the animals are required to run for a long time at great speed, therefore their

form must be such as to promote the best staying gait, which is quite different from that which would give the most rapid spurt.

The action in a staying gallop consists mainly in propulsion from the shoulder. A fore foot moved by muscles connected with the shoulder, throws the animal clear of the ground when he makes his spring. As he flies through the air, he reaches forward with his hind feet, and, touching the ground first with one and then the other, carries the body forward until one fore foot has touched the ground, when the hind feet are successively drawn up, and the other fore foot is brought down in position to repeat the spring. I find the popular opinion is that the dog springs off with his hind feet, and alights on his fore feet, but this is only true when he is jumping over obstacles, or when pushed to the utmost speed. In the latter case, when he can run no faster on his shoulder action, he begins also to spring off with one hind foot, and alight on one fore foot, but this spring is never as long as the fore foot spring, which is still kept up. This run consists of alternate springs from fore and hind feet, and represents the extreme of possible speed. No animal can long endure the shock at shoulders and pasterns of alighting on the fore feet after a spring from behind, so this gait is useful only for a spurt; but an animal who is light both in build and actual weight, can endure it longer than a heavier one. The greyhound is especially adapted to this form of running.

Pointers and setters should be chosen with especial reference to their shoulders, rather than to their hind quarters.

THE ENGLISH SETTER.

I have just observed that Webster's Dictionary describes the setter as "a hunting dog of the hound kind." Other authorities describe him as a kind of

spaniel.* But I discover, on study of old books and old pictures, that these breeds have been separate and distinct in the most ancient times of which we have any record.

Science may indeed hold that ages ago they had a common origin, and to a naturalist their resemblances are of interest; but their value to the sportsman depends upon their differences of form and habit, and he is principally interested in knowing that they have been so long and so entirely distinct that any result of intercrossing can be easily bred out again. In the year 1700,

Fig. 7.—ENGLISH SETTERS.—BY FRANCOIS DESPORTES.

the fashionable type of English setter was what is shown in the illustration, from a painting by François Desportes (Fig. 7). It will be observed that it was then the practice to clip the feather of the tail. The other drawing shows the field-trial type of to-day. Barring the fact that many Laverack and Llewellyn setters have too much occipital protuberance, the legacy, perhaps, of a Gordon or Irish

*I find it stated in various encyclopedias that the setter results from a cross between the spaniel and the pointer. I think this is completely disproved by the fact that in crosses between the setter and the spaniel the setter blood is most prepotent, and stamps itself most strongly on the progeny, which would not be the case if the spaniel were the purer breed.

cross, they give us the true race type of the English setter as he existed in Europe for several centuries. In stating that for a number of years this breed has eclipsed all others in the field, I wish to record my belief that it results from the fact that the appearance of the coat has protected the breed from the hound, greyhound, and bull-dog crosses that have so injured the pointer.

Such crosses injure the appearance of the setter's coat so much that their results are weeded out.

Spaniel, collie, and poodle crosses hurt the coat less, and are, to some degree, allowed to remain, but they do infinitely less damage to the working instincts of a bird dog than the smooth-haired crosses that have been allowed to pollute the best pointer blood, and which have only been bred out again in a few strains.

The weight of the English setter should approximate that of the pointer, but will average a little less.

Like the pointer, the setter should stand high at the shoulder and low at the rump, and there is much that is identical in the proportions of working parts. But there are essential differences marking the race type, and these are important as indices of merit, although we should be at a loss to explain their connection with the dog's work.

The scale of points is the same as for the pointer, except in regard to coat, and to symmetry and quality, which are rated at five points each.

The skull should be lighter and narrower between the ears than the pointer's, and should be without the occipital protuberance, although when that is present it is but a trifling fault. The nose should be at least four inches long, and wide at the end. Between the point and root there should be no fullness, and the brows must rise sharply from it. The nostrils should be wide apart, with large openings; end moist and cool; color, black, or dark brown; jaws exactly equal in length. The ears should be

shorter than those of the pointer, slightly rounded, thin, and soft in leather; carried flat to the cheeks, so as not to show the inside; destitute of tendency to prick, and clothed with silky hair about two inches long.

The eyes should be of medium size, bright, rich brown in color, and set with angles straight across. Lips not so long as the pointer's, but slightly full at the angles.

The neck is thinner and flatter than the pointer's, and less arched, though still slightly so. It should be well

Fig. 8. – ENGLISH SETTER.

set on the shoulders, not "ewe-necked." Though the skin is loose, there must be no throatiness. The shoulders and chest must be as described for the pointer. The same is true of back, quarters, stifles, legs, elbows, and hocks, save that the hips should be less angular and bony.

The feet differ in having a good deal of hair between the toes, owing to which advantage they will do with less arch of toe. The tail should be carried slightly above the line of the back, though a higher carriage is admissible if there be no curl. The feather should be of straight,

silky hair, and of good length, tapering to the point, and giving an outline like a scythe-blade.

Symmetry and quality form a less valuable index to a setter's merit than to a pointer's, and are rated at only five points. In general terms, they should give a style suggesting more of softness and grace and less of rugged strength than the pointers. While smooth prettiness of form is of bad augury as to working ability in the pointer, it is, on the contrary, a very good sign of field quality in an English setter. The coat is rated at five points, and is very important. It should be soft and silky, without curl. The color should be bright and clean. It offers the same variety as the pointer's, with the addition that tan-markings are often found with black and white, and are very much admired. When the white is interspersed with a profusion of small, delicately shaded ticks it is called "belton," and is very handsome.

THE BLACK-AND-TAN, OR GORDON, SETTER.

The black-and-tan, or Gordon, setter has appeared to less advantage in America than other breeds. In public trials he has done little, and in private I have not been so fortunate as to see a brilliant performer, though of good, steady, practical dogs not a few, especially showing to advantage on snipe-marshes or in dense coverts. It has been claimed by some breeders that a smaller and more lightly built Gordon could be bred, which would equal the English setter in speed and endurance.

On theoretical grounds, I have been inclined to favor this idea, and were I breeding Gordons, would certainly try it. Unfortunately, such light weights as I have seen in the field were inferior to those of heavier build. Speaking, then, from what knowledge I have been able to gain, I must prefer the heavy type until the advantages of the light dogs shall have been demonstrated.

These dogs are to be recommended chiefly for their great beauty, and for their special adaptation to the use of the sportsmen of the North and the East, where small fields, swampy ground, and dense coverts are principally to be worked. The points of the Gordon setter are the same as those of the English, but the appearance of the dogs differs in many respects, as follows:

Fig. 9.—GORDON SETTER.

The general outline of the dog is more square and massive, and the actual weight is considerably greater.

The skull is heavier, and has more occipital protuberance.

The nose is a little wider; the feather of the tail is shorter, and does not begin so near the root.

The coat is harder and coarser, and shows more disposition to curl, though the less of this the better.

The color should be a rich black, without mixture with the tan, and the latter should be of a deep ma-

hogany tone, appearing on lips, cheeks, throat, spot over eyes, fore legs nearly to elbow, hind legs up to stifles, and on under side of flag, but not running into the long hair. There may be a spot of white on breast or toes, but the less the better.

Many of the best specimens of this breed are too straight in stifles and tight in shoulders to run well, but the proper type, as I conceive it, should be built much like a bear—loose-jointed, with elbows let far down and hocks very low, giving an easy, rolling gait, admirably adapted to getting over bad ground.

Such dogs are rare, and the owner of one has a treasure he can not too highly prize.

I consider this to be distinctly a Scotch breed, and probably quite ancient, though I have not been able to trace it to such antiquity as the English setter.

THE IRISH SETTER.

The very best field dog I ever saw was an Irish setter; yet, seek as I will, I do not find enough such dogs to put the breed on a par with either English setters or pointers. It is common to account for the infrequency of good performers by saying that the Irish dog needs more training and constant work; but this will not account for the fact that these exceptionally good dogs are very tractable and easy to handle, and are no more rank than other dogs at the beginning of the open season.

My own way of accounting for the facts is this:

I consider that the "bird dogs" are true and ancient breeds, whose instincts regarding their approach to game have been fixed for ages so firmly, that they can only be disturbed by the introduction of the blood of some other breed having conflicting instincts. Such outcrosses have been frequent in all times, and the remedy for the damage they occasion is usually found in inbreeding,

whereby the proportion of the alien blood is speedily diminished.

But it may happen that the outcross has been to some extremely prepotent breed, when, if the infusion be strong in a given strain, inbreeding will rather strengthen than diminish its effects. Something like this seems to have happened to some of the Irish setter strains most

Fig. 10.—IRISH SETTER.

extensively bred here. Their faults appear to be augmented rather than diminished by inbreeding.

The remedy will be found in uniting the blood of many separate strains, in order to get in as much as possible that is free from the particular taint in question. A good Irish dog is so exceedingly good, that no pains should be spared to make the breeding of them more sure.

For those who shoot a great deal, and work the same dog on a great variety of game, there is no dog like a good Irish setter.

Hard, courageous, fast, and with endurance unequaled, with a beautiful coat and cleanly habits to recommend him as a house dog, he will always be a favorite with the men who keep but one dog.

The points are the same as for the English setter, but the description differs materially, and while such has not been the practice in show-judging, I believe it is of the highest importance to this breed that all such differences should be made the most of.

The skull should be longer and narrower than the English setter's, with strong occipital protuberance.

The nose is longer, and the end is of a reddish brown color, and should not be pink or black.

The eyes should be deep brown in color—a pale eye is a blemish. Ears long enough to reach within about half an inch of the end of the nose, set on low and well back, hanging close to the cheeks. Lips deep enough to give a square appearance to the muzzle, but not pendulous; whiskers red. The shoulders are very long and sloping; chest deep and narrow, with back ribs shorter than the English setter's, giving more the appearance of being cut up under the loin. Loin narrower than the English setter's, yet well arched and strong; hips also narrower, and more bony. Legs rather long, with elbows well let down, and very free; stifles very much bent; quarters quite sloping, and, though muscular, not heavy. The tail is clothed with straight hair, falling down like a comb; never bushy nor curly.

The coat should be of moderately coarse, but glossy, hair, which may be wavy, but not curly. The legs are well, but not profusely, feathered. The color should be a rich red, of a burnt sienna tone, without any black hairs interspersed. There may be a little white on the breast or toes, or a blaze in the face, but the less the better.

The general appearance of the Irish setter is of a slender, rather leggy dog, somewhat gaunt, his ribs showing, even when in good condition. His style is most taking, being very bold, free, and dashing. I have found an old dog of this breed to be the best of all for use on ruffed grouse. This bird flushes very wild before a white or black dog, but apparently mistakes the red dog for a fox, and lies much better, since it expects to escape easily from any closer approach, and, seeing the dog motionless, does not take wing until alarmed by the approach of the hunter, thus affording a shot; or, if flushed by the dog, the bird will usually alight in some tree near by.

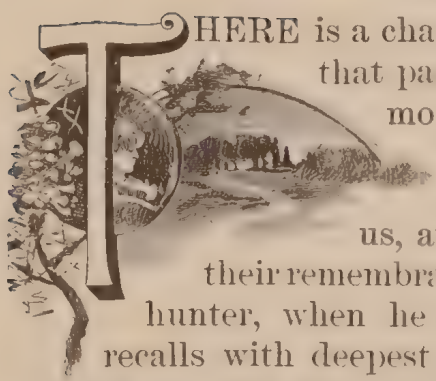
In concluding this brief review of our field dogs, I would be glad to dispel the doubts and distrust so many entertain regarding our dog shows and trials. Accustomed to take part in public competitions of various kinds, I have ever found these to be the best-conducted and most correctly judged of all, and I am able to act in reliance on their results as a guide to merit. The often assumed discrepancy between field trials and shows is merely imaginary. The dog who wins in the one will make a good record in the other so constantly as to be a matter of surprise. Theory and practice are not always to be found in such good accord as here. Yet there are influences, coming mostly from across the ocean, that are seeking to create and uphold a purely show type for these dogs, in complete antagonism to that which has been established and confirmed by centuries of field work. It is for our practical sportsmen to unite in resistance to such innovations, and jealously to preserve the ancestral form of each breed.

To all who love dogs, there is the constant temptation to have too many, resulting in the necessity of confining them to the kennel-yard, where they will not thrive. No dog can be happy and well unless free to enjoy the

society of his master, and be in truth a member of his family. To have the best results, therefore, one should keep only as many as can be admitted to such privileges. I have never looked in one of the great kennels where a swarm of dogs was kept, without thinking of children in some great asylum, where there might indeed be every comfort and luxury, but, after all, no home. Though the fare be coarse and scanty, still man or dog will thrive best where there is close personal sympathy and companionship.

THE CANVAS-BACK DUCK.

By William Bruce Leffingwell.



THERE is a charm in the scenes of early life that passing years can only recall in most delightful memories, and things we loved best, when children, still cling fondly to us, and our riper years only add to their remembrances. Then it is that the boyish hunter, when he arrives at manhood's estate, recalls with deepest fervor those incidents which afforded him the greatest pleasure, when, as a child, he trod the carpet of the forest green, clambering the hill-sides, or communed in sweetest harmony with the feathered songsters in the glen, or, with hook, rod, and line, made by his own ingenious fingers, captured the finny tribe, in tempting spots, where his inquisitiveness taught him to try; and so the man, when called upon by some enthusiast to name the bird he prizes above all others, will at once recall to mind the days when he was a boy, and the lessons he learned then, under the silent trees, studying the birds as Nature made them, in the warm and budding spring-time, when the mellow wind pervades forest, stream, and field, and instinct told these birds to mate, build their nests, and rear their young.

When one has, as a boy, had opportunities for study and observation, has grown up among the wilds of semi-civilization, and has passed hours, and days, watching and studying birds in their wild state, the silvered years

of manhood touch the chords of departed years, and his heart vibrates with the memories of those days, gone forever, but engraved for life upon his mind, never to be effaced; and so it is that every experienced hunter loves some particular bird best. The foundation on which is built his love was formed in years gone by; for, if the pinnated grouse, the vision of the past is before his eyes—the boundless prairies he visited and settled on in early days, the constant presence of these birds, their booming cries in early spring, the pursuit of them in autumnal days, and their most excellent flavor.

Another mind reverts to a time when there floated, in sweet, delicious strains, through the dewy morning a plaintive "Bob White, Bob White," and silvered fields were white in shrouds of frost, while dogs were racing in fevered anticipation of secreted game. While another, whose heart is softened by the sweet solitude of pathless woods, is bound, by the strongest ties of early affection, to the bosky wood, beneath whose silent trees his very being has time and again been startled into feverish excitement, as the ruffed grouse sprang from its hiding-place, or when, in stealthy silence, he has tried to draw himself into faintest obscurity on hearing the distant gobble, or the nearer "put, put," of the much-prized wild turkey. And so it is that to assemble a body of sportsmen, each individual would

champion some game bird as the one *par excellence*, in *his* estimation, one fit to be crowned king of game birds.

It is the belief of many, that the height of sporting pleasures, with the gun, can only be obtained in conjunction with a setter or pointer, and this is the opinion generally, and has been from time immemorial. Kings and princes have enjoyed their greatest sport when in company with well-trained dogs. While we can not boast of the blood-royal coursing through our veins, still, there has never existed one of royal birth who enjoys sports afield more than the average citizen of America.

It is our existence, born free, breathing the pure air of the grandest country on the face of the earth from toddling infancy, having our ears filled with tales of the chase, seeing our fathers and brothers going forth in the morning, wandering where they chose, returning at night laden with game—the game belonging to no man until captured—no wonder that we inherit a love for shooting, and fishing, and all out-of-door recreation.

I had sent me, the other day, a proof of the excellent illustration gracing Mr. Baines' article on "Wild Turkey Shooting" in this book. While looking at it, and admiring the alert expression, the bold, yet startled, look of the bird, a friend of mine called. I knew him to have had great experience in hunting turkeys, and, without saying a word, handed him the illustration. He gazed at it intently, studied it fully a minute, then, laying it down on my desk, said: "*There* is a perfect portrait of the shrewdest, wildest, and most cunning bird that ever spread wings. Look at him! He was traveling along without any suspicion; he has heard a stick break, a distant voice, or some noise he mistrusts, and now he listens to learn what's up. I tell you, the American wild turkey ought to have been selected as the bird emblematic of our country, for he is the king of game birds."

"Why," said I, laughingly, "I have just received a letter from a friend on the Chesapeake, and he uses almost your language, only he says the canvas-back duck is entitled to the crown." I wished so much, then, that the two advocates could have been present, for their discussion would have afforded me both pleasure and profit. Both past the middle age of life, one reared in the East, on the Chesapeake, the other brought up in the West, where game could be had for the seeking, and who had bagged hundreds of turkeys, surely none could be found more competent or experienced than they, and yet each proclaimed the bird he knew best as the noblest game bird in existence.

When one seeks the canvas-back duck of to-day, he little knows, that is, if a young man, of the great abundance that once existed of these birds. It is generally supposed that, in the Chesapeake Bay and Eastern waters, the birds are found in greatest plenty, and many believe that they are a bird so rare, and so delicious in their flavor, that they confine their presence entirely to the East. This is not so, as they are found, at times, in the Middle and Western States, while in California and Oregon they are fully as plenty as in the regions of the Chesapeake. Where food is plenty—the food which they especially like, and which gives to them the delicious flavor for which they are noted, the *Valisneria spiralis*—there they may be found. Some are shot in the marshes and lakes of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, and other Northern and Western States, the places they go to depending entirely upon the food to be obtained.

Canvas-back ducks are deep-water ducks, and seek their food in an entirely different manner from the mallards and other shoal-water ducks, which feed similarly to tame ducks, for canvas-backs get their food by div-

ing, disappearing completely from the surface of the water, and re-appearing with the food in their mouths. Their food, the *Valisneria spiralis*, is a bulbous plant which grows in deep water in some inland lakes and bays. The plant is described scientifically as follows:

"*Valisneria spiralis.*—A genus of plant remarkable on account of the very curious manner in which the process of fertilization is effected. A perennial herb, bearing a tuft of thin, narrow, green, grass-like leaves. The two sexes are borne on separate plants. The male flowers are extremely minute and sensile, but when mature they become detached and rise to the surface of the water. The female plants, on the other hand, are borne singly on the end of a long, slender, spirally-twisted stalk, uncoils more or less, according to the depth of the water, so as to allow the flower to float on the surface, where it expands, and is fertilized by the floating pollen, after which the spiral stem coils up again and conveys the flowers to the bottom of the water."

Mr. E. Hough, in a recent communication to the *Forest and Stream*, having investigated the *Valisneria spiralis* in its home, thus writes of it:

During a recent visit to Lake Koshkonong, Wisconsin, I had opportunity to learn something of the wild celery which gives that lake such a reputation as a resort for the canvas-back duck. In company with Mr. W. Y. Wentworth, superintendent of the Blackhawk Club, and Mr. Duane Starin, perhaps the best-known shooter of that locality, I went out on the lake, and was shown how the wild celery seeds are gathered from the bottom of the lake—for that is where they must be gathered, if at all. These gentlemen probably have more practical knowledge of the wild celery plant and its seed than anyone else, for they used to sell the seed to parties wishing to plant waters to wild celery. They experimented for themselves, and found that the seed taken from the bottom of the lake would grow, and they have heard from

successful results from different lots of seed they have shipped to clubs, etc. It is a simple matter to plant the seed, the only thing necessary being to drop the pods at the spot where the celery is wished to grow. The seeds should doubtless be kept wet all the time, as that is their natural condition. In Koshkonong Lake the wild celery grows out of sand, clay, mud, or almost any other kind of bottom, and there is no apparent reason why it should not grow in any shallow water where it is well planted.

At the bottom of the water the fertilized seed-pod lies until moisture and decomposition have released the seeds from their covering. At any time before the pods have reached the bottom on their return journey, it is probable they are not fertilized sufficiently for growth. It is on the bottom, therefore, that the celery hunters look for the seed. The only implement they use is a rake with a wooden head about sixteen inches long, into which are set ten inch teeth of stiff wire, about three-fourths of an inch apart. Koshkonong is a shallow lake, hardly more than six or eight feet at its deepest, so that the rake need not be very long or ponderous.

We rowed out of the mouth of the pretty Rock River, crossed the head of the lake, along where the canvas-back blinds are, and in front of the big bluff where "Koshkonong Place" sits looking out over the lake. We fell to raking like toilers of the sea. Three or four ineffectual hauls were made, bringing up moss, pickerel weed, decayed stems, and a few young croppies and bull-heads, when Mr. Wentworth called my attention to a long, dark, slim-looking affair, tapered at both ends and slightly curved. It was five or six inches long, and an eighth of an inch thick, and looked more like a frozen and disgruntled angleworm than anything else.

"There's your celery seed," said he. And in this way, after a half-hour of hard work in the icy water—this was November 24th—we got half a dozen pods or so, including a good specimen, and several in which the natural decomposition had gone so far as to leave the seeds exposed to view. We then went home, and it appeared to us that the acquisition of wild celery seeds was a very slow and laborious process.

That night we divided a pod into one-inch sections, and counted the number of seeds carried in a one-inch length of the pod. We found that the seeds ran about sixty to the inch, and we figured that from this there must be about 500,000 seeds in a quart jar of the pods. It is very probable that there are normally more than sixty seeds to the inch, as the specimens we counted had already partly opened, and perhaps some of the seeds had escaped. The seeds are very minute, slender, and pointed. They resemble ant-eggs, but are very much smaller and a little darker in color.

From what we saw of the seeds, and their great numbers, it would appear that the wild celery is a plant which could easily and abundantly be sown and grown in any shallow waters. I have heard of, and I believe in the mention of the Hennepin Club last winter I described, an attempt to plant the wild celery roots. This attempt was, I believe, unsuccessful. I don't believe it is the natural or rational way to plant wild celery, and I think anyone who would tear up the roots of this plant from a water where it was native, would be doing a very unwise, wasteful, and foolish thing.

The delicacy of flavor found in the canvas-back is lacking in others of the duck species, and epicures pride themselves that, so infallible is their taste, in no possible manner can they be deceived, even going so far as claiming that the locality where a bird has been shot can be told by the flavor of the bird. This peculiar flavor is produced by the wild celery they have eaten. Now, this assertion is not made in an unauthorized manner, for it came within my knowledge, about a year ago, that certain *connoisseurs* claimed the canvas-backs of the Potomac to be superior to any of the Western birds, and two game dinners were served in New York City, to six persons at each cover, and they were unable to decide, three claiming the Eastern birds much the finer flavored, while the other three could see no difference. The gentlemen who forwarded the Western birds submitted the cor-

respondence to me, also the verdict, which was a disagreement, and the trial is to be made again.

As the *Valisneria spiralis* is the same wherever found, and imparts to and thoroughly impregnates the bird with its celery taste, there ought not to be, and can not be, any difference in the birds when they have partaken of these bulbous roots to the exclusion of other food. When, through overflows, droughts, or other causes, the canvas-backs are deprived of this *Valisneria spiralis* they feed on other food, snails and fish. This gives them a dry, leathery taste, that makes them almost unfit for food.

But there is another duck, the companion of the canvas-back, that vies with it as a table luxury. That bird is the red-head, so similar to the canvas-back that thousands have been sold and eaten for canvas-backs, and where one is acquainted with them, their habits, feeding, and resorts, it is not to be wondered at. The difference between them is not great, and one is often mistaken for the other. The canvas-back is larger, plumper, with darker coloring on the head and neck; but the distinguishing difference is the bill. As in the canvas-back, the bill begins high up on the head, is jet-black, and runs in a straight line to its tip, being quite narrow. In the red-head, the bill is of a bluish slate, broader than in the canvas-back, and slightly concave. Gastronomically speaking, let both be shot after weeks of feasting in beds of wild celery, and the man who can discover a finer flavor in the canvas-back has a much more acute sense of taste than I.

Where these birds breed, while definitely known, is a source of astonishment; for, while they are with us in the fall, remaining in southern climes throughout the winter, when the wintry months have passed, they fly in tireless flight, traversing thousands of miles of settlements and

solitudes, to breed in Alaska and the extreme North. The Canada goose is much the same in taking such long flights, and yet they will often stop and rear their young in Dakota or Minnesota. Not so with the canvas-back, for their desire seems to be to always seek the impenetrable wilds of the far North, and only to return when the cold blasts warn them to depart from their summer homes.

I have been in correspondence with a gentleman in San Francisco, Cal., and his description of shooting canvas-backs on the Coast will open wide the eyes of some of the Eastern hunters. It is nothing unusual for him to bag from sixty to eighty canvas-backs in a day's hunt to his gun. Their food in California and Oregon is the same as in the East, and epicures there claim there is no bird on earth that equals their bird when properly placed on the table; but, as I said before, the food makes the bird, and let the canvas-back be fattened on wild celery, and it will taste the same whether it comes from Maryland, Wisconsin, Iowa, or California.

There seems to be a local prejudice about these birds that is highly amusing. As an illustration, one writer says: "In the Chesapeake alone are they perfect; of course they are all canvas-back ducks from the point of view of the gastronomic enthusiast. The bird only reaches culinary superiority when it alights on the Chesapeake Bay and its myriad arms. Here, its flesh acquires a peculiarly delicious and indescribable taste, which is largely owing to its feeding on a plant called wild celery. Water and climate in the Chesapeake must contain some other and unknown quality or condition which brings the canvas-back ducks to a state of perfection, for I am told that California and Illinois—I am not certain about Texas and North Carolina—also supply wild celery as food for the canvas-back, and yet it permits no dispute,

that the fowls which come from those States are no more akin to the Chesapeake canvas-back than the rice-bird of the South is equal to its own self when, under another name and different food conditions, it furnishes an incomparable morsel as the buttery reed-bird of the Delaware marshes. As to the canvas-backs which are occasionally found along the shores of Long Island, their flesh is not distinguishable from the ordinary duck's, because, in the absence of the wild celery, they demean themselves by feeding upon fish."

I hope the reader will not deem me guilty of agreeing with such broad assertions, for I do not, but simply quote from him, that you may see how prejudice will affect a man; but when we read further, that "decoys are not used because the canvas-back, unlike his more plebeian brothers, will not fly to them," we feel our hearts tempered with charity, for *our* experience has been that, tempted by good decoys, properly placed and set out by an expert, one of the easiest ducks to decoy is the canvas-back. When a man says a duck will not decoy, he simply asserts that it will not alight among its kind. I have shot thousands of ducks, and have yet to find the species that will not decoy at the right time and place.

Some months ago, when in the office of Robert Law, one of the most prominent citizens of Chicago, he said to me: "I see, Mr. Leffingwell, you have written a book on wild fowl shooting. I wish I had known you intended doing so, for I would liked to have told you what I know about canvas-back ducks." Imagine my surprise, for here was a man talking duck-shooting to me, who I supposed never fired a gun. "Why, Mr. Law," said I, "do you mean to say *you* have had experience with canvas-back ducks?" He invited me to be seated, and this is the story he told me:

CANVAS-BACK DUCK.

"When a young man, my capital consisted of health and perseverance. I found myself on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, where my mother bought a large farm. The only labor obtainable, at that time, were slaves, that I hired from their masters. I boarded these negroes, and their meat-bill was a serious item, for I had many under my control. What do you suppose I fed them on? *Canvas-back ducks!* Yes, canvas-back ducks; and at this late date, you can form no idea of how plenty they were. Why, I have seen the sky darkened with them, the bay like the driven snow, as their white backs glistened in the sun, and when they arose, it seemed like one continuous roar of thunder. I hired a man to shoot them for me, simply to keep our men supplied with meat. It was no trick to kill them, for they abounded in countless thousands. All through the winter, we lived on canvas-back ducks, served three times a day, until salt pork became a delicacy, and canvas-back ducks, which now command $6 or $7 a pair, were set aside by slaves in disgust. Toward spring, my men threatened to quit me. I could not stand this, for no other help could be had; but they threatened to leave me, and I called in their leader, and wanted to know if I ever abused them. 'No, Massa Law,' said he; 'but facts am, we's gwine to quit 'less you stop feedin' us on canvas-back, for de Lawd knows dat a nigger's stomach can't allus be punished wid canvas-backs, an' 'less you feed us on po'k, least twice a day, we's gwine to go back to de plantation.' Of course I gave in; but I often think of it now, when canvas-backs are worth $7 a pair, of how those niggers refused them, and made me supply them with pork. Another thing, do you know I believe that winter was when decoys were first discovered? Tell you how it was; we were repairing a vessel, and ducks were flying thick. The day was a cloudy, blustery one, and the birds flew near the shore.

Some boys threw some whitish-colored blocks into the water, and the canvas-backs kept darting to them. I noticed an old gunner watching this performance, and the next day the old fellow went out with a gunny-sack half-filled with blocks, hewn to resemble ducks. That night he returned with his boat half-full of ducks. Every time, after that, he took the same bag along, and some other hunters watched him, and found the ducks were constantly sailing in to these imitations he had out. After this, they all got to using them, with added improvements; but I am satisfied that those boys throwing blocks were the origin of decoys. Soon after this, I began using decoys, also sink-boxes, with the best of results. You can form no idea how plenty canvas-backs were through the late fall and winter. One winter, a neighbor of mine, who was blessed with some ice, packed at least 1,000. They were so plenty that they commanded a very small price. A shilling apiece was considered high, and hundreds were sold at a sixpence apiece, or given away. The exceedingly low prices that could be obtained for them were no inducement for market-shooters, and the ducks were not sought after much, except by local hunters; but soon after this, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other cities began to learn and appreciate the delicacy of the canvas-back. They brought, at the bay, 50 cents a pair, and, even at that price, a good shot would make from $10 to $20 a day. As the demand increased, so the ingenuity of the hunters was taxed to capture the birds, and they were coaxed near shore by the process known as 'toling,' that is, by a little spaniel trained to romp and play along the shore, while the hunters lay concealed in blinds within gun-range; but the sportsman delighted most to shoot them over decoys, as they came into the little bays or pockets to feed on the wild celery. They were plenty then, and we

shot them from blinds, made of cedar boughs stuck into the mud or sink-boxes. They flew across from place to place, and there were plenty of points where we got pass-shooting, or caught them sitting among our decoys. I wish you could have seen some of those birds. When they fell, and struck the frozen ground, the concussion often split them wide open, they were so fat from feeding on wild celery.

"I notice many authorities state 'that the widgeon is a daring thief, and robs the canvas-back of its food, after the canvas-back has dived and brought it to the surface.' Now, when it comes to stealing wild celery sprouts, the canvas-back is the biggest thief on record. There used to be another duck associating with the canvas-back. It wasn't the red-head, and I don't now recall its name. It was rather a small duck, but a great diver. It used to dive down and bring up the wild celery bulbs and sprouts, but it would no sooner appear than three or four canvas-backs would rush for it, and snatch away the celery. I have seen this done scores of times; and, before one of these ducks could get a decent meal, it would have to supply celery for perhaps half a dozen big, fat, lazy canvas-backs. Am sorry I don't remember the name of this industrious duck, but we never shot them. They were small, with slim bodies, while their bills were long and powerful; besides, they seemed to enjoy pulling up the celery, and left plenty floating around, which enticed the canvas-backs in.

"You never saw a swivel-gun, did you? Of course you didn't, for they were before your day; but I tell you, they were murderous things. Just imagine a gun loaded with a couple of pounds of shot, with powder enough to throw it with great penetration. These swivel-guns were used at night, by poachers and men who didn't care how many ducks they destroyed or crippled. The gun was

fastened on the bow of the boat; then, on moonlight nights, or with artificial lights thrown on the drifting or sleeping birds, the ducks, naturally inquisitive, would gently swim aside from the boat that was being slowly sculled among them, and, when an immense body of them were together, the death-dealing gun would belch forth, killing anywhere from twenty to fifty, while the cripples dove, or sneaked away, to be gobbled up the next day by fish-hawks. Why, these guns were young cannons, and I have heard them roar over the bay all night long. At break of day, one could see these immense hawks hovering, circling, and darting after the cripples. Of course the ducks would dive, but the middle of the bay afforded them no hiding-place, and, at last, the persevering hawk would tire them out. A quick dart, and then we would see a whitish object hanging below the hawk, as it flew to some tree to devour the bird. The hawks were immense, and looked as large as eagles. This shooting of the ducks at night was simply scandalous, for it was bound to exterminate them. Between being hunted in the day-time and persecuted at night, there was no time or place in which they could feel secure or obtain rest. So outrageous did this appear, that (I think it was in the winter of 1845) the Legislature of Maryland passed a law prohibiting the use of swivel-guns and shooting the birds after dark.

"I wish you could have seen the birds in some of their great flights. Why, that was forty-five years ago! Great Scott, man! Here I have been telling you of scenes in my early life that I haven't thought of for years and years, and look at the time of day! Why, I promised to have been home an hour ago. You must excuse me, for I *must* go."

He buttoned up his great-coat, and laying his hand fondly on my shoulder, as he bade me good-night, there

shone in his handsome face the delight of happy days, recalled in telling me some of the scenes of his early life; for, in imparting what he had seen to me, the pleasant years he passed on the shores of the Chesapeake were once again before him, and I don't know who was the more pleased, he in recalling or I in listening to his fascinating stories descriptions of days long since passed among the canvas-backs. I could imagine I was with him in all the sights he described, for I have seen acres and acres of mallards, blue-bills, and other ducks floating in dark squares on the bosom of the Mississippi, and have seen the sky, at evening-time, just as it was crimson and purple in the light of the setting sun, filled and flecked with thousands of mallards, as they flew hither and thither, seeking their roosting-grounds, while the air resounded with their "m'amph, m'amph," and "quack, quack, quack," as the birds dropped softly into the marsh.

In shooting canvas-backs over decoys, great judgment must be displayed in placing out the decoys, selecting the place and building the blind, the desire, at all times, being to place one's self as near as possible to the place where they habitually feed.

Cold, blustery days are the best, for on such days they are less suspicious. While they are exceedingly wary, and are blessed with eyes of the keenest perception, yet they are as full of curiosity as a woman, and while at times they will not come in to the decoys without much coaxing, at others they rush in with the greatest recklessness.

There is no duck in which the bump of inquisitiveness is as fully developed as in the canvas-back. They seek to know the meaning of every uncertain movement or suspicious object. I have seen them sit with their long necks stretched up, staring with intense curiosity at a

passing steamboat, and then, flying, make an almost complete circuit around the boat, to see if there wasn't something they had overlooked. I have seen them alight far outside of decoys, then, after gradually swimming nearer, at last boldly swim among the decoys, within fifty feet of our concealed boat. It fills the soul of the hunter with delight to see them dart down to decoys. Down they come, aided by the strong wind, at a 100-mile gait, flying past the decoys as if they did not see them, just out of gun-range; then, with a wide circle, return up-wind with a speed almost as great, and with set wing and unabated speed slide into the water, shoving the water ahead of them in crested foam.

They are very cunning when wounded, great divers, and cripples should at once be shot. There is no bird in the world, that is hunted as a game bird, that so taxes the endurance of a dog, and the dog, to retrieve them, must be brave as a lion, entirely devoid of fear, hardy enough to withstand cold, snow, and to retrieve among floating ice as well as in early fall. When a man has a dog like this, he is blessed with a jewel almost beyond price.

I will forbear the discussion of the breed of dogs to use, the kind of guns best adapted, and the charge to be used, for Mr. John G. Smith, in his most excellent article on "Inland Duck-shooting," has given his views on those subjects, which fully accord with my many years of experience in the pursuit of wild fowl.

There is a charm in duck-shooting which defies the pen of the most gifted writer to explain, and only the experienced can enjoy; and to-day, as I write this article, seeing before me the little group of red-heads that appear in this article, they recall to mind many days in departed years, when the frost had gilded the meadows, and I had sat reclining in my boat, watching red-heads basking in the October sun, while starlings and black-

birds, in their suits of black, red, and gold, were teetering on the waving rice-stalks, as they sang their merry songs, a fit accompaniment to music of 1,000 harps, that the winds imitated, as they played through the seared and yellow rushes in the marsh, making the *sweetest* music in the world for the man who loves the fields and streams.

GUNS.

By Arthur W. du Bray ("Gaucho").

I WILL endeavor, to the best of my ability, to treat on the subject of guns in as brief and concise a manner as possible—brief, because my tether is limited as to space; concise, because I will deal with nothing further than the practical part, leaving all theoretical points to other pens and wiser heads.

The shot-gun of to-day is the breech-loader, fast tending to the hammerless, and gradually leaning toward the ejector; therefore, descriptions of antiquated fire-arms, be they ever so elaborate, can be of little practical value nowadays, excepting insomuch that the younger sportsman will do well to read of these old-fashioned guns and rifles, and then compare them with what he can obtain now, and thereafter thank his stars that he was not contemporaneous with flint-locks, which went off with a whiz-bang that rendered wing-shooting decidedly uncertain to any but a first-class marksman.

I will divide my subject into three parts, viz.: Field-guns, Trap-guns, and Duck-guns, and endeavor to describe each from a thoroughly practical standpoint, and from the education gained by twenty-five years of experience over thousands of miles of ground—some in Europe, but more particularly over the vast area contained between the British frontier of North America and that of Patagonia in the far South—while my range

of guns embraces Purdey, Westley Richards, Lancaster, in years gone by, latterly, Scott and Parker, besides many an odd gun, here and there, of both English and American makes. I may furthermore add that I never have let the opportunity go by to test a reputedly good gun, and that I have fired thousands of shots for pattern and penetration, with all kinds of guns and about every variety of ammunition, so that, if my knowledge is meagre on these subjects, it is purely from want of ability to comprehend, as my opportunities have been legion.

FIELD-GUNS.

The *sine qua non* of a fowling-piece is that it be a perfect fit—the bore, weight, length, and make are, individually or in the aggregate, as nothing compared to the fit—and in this most essential feature no man can impart much more than the most superficial information; while nothing short of actual trial on game will reveal the hidden mystery contained in every gun-stock, or, rather, peculiar manner, position, style, or action of the man that stands behind it. One man mounts a gun with a jerk, aligns it, and shoots; another brings it up deliberately, but the moment the heel-plate touches his shoulder, the trigger is pulled. Now, in the first case, though not an exact fit, yet moderately good shooting can be done, because a certain aim is taken, while in the second—by far the better way—no gun that is a misfit will do good execution, for the simple reason that this style of shooter does not see his gun, but is staring, both eyes wide open, at his quarry; so that a poor shot, who only shoots a little now and then, will generally go nearer his average with any borrowed gun than the good shot, who never troubles himself about breech or muzzle, but rather shoots from intuition—trusting entirely to his hands getting the proper direction, while his head instantly

calculates the amount of leading required for every shot. Beware of any gun that is *nearly* a fit; for with one that is clearly a misfit one will take more pains, and be sure to, at any rate, try to direct it, whereas the gun that seemingly is pointed right, but in reality is a little high or low, right or left—why, this kind of gun is a nuisance, and has made many an otherwise good shot give up wing-shooting in despair. Standing opposite a mirror, placed perpendicularly in front of the shooter, may help him to know where the muzzle and breech of his gun are the instant he mounts it; so, also, will this be discovered by standing in a dark room, and sighting quickly at a light, when wheeling about, in some other room or hallway as far distant as possible. These are make-shifts, and may teach the rudiments, as it were; but actual certainty can only be reached by frequent trials at moving objects—birds flying in all directions, inanimate targets going high or low, swift or slow, and particularly all shots going fast and low to the right (these, to the right-handed man, are hardest of all).

A gun should never be bought, out and out, in a gun-store without the privilege of trying it on game or at the trap; for, be it ever so good a shooter according to its tag, or even its tested performance before the intending purchaser, yet there is always a much more important point to decide, and one that can only be settled by a real test, so that, to save much trouble and annoyance, the gun should be taken to some shooting-ground, loaded with smokeless powder, and then tried at all angles and elevations obtainable; then, if found to come to place without any adjustment after touching the shoulder, that gun is a fit.

I lay particular stress on using smokeless powder—preferably Schultze—as when this kind, in light loads, is used, the shooter can tell at once just where his gun is

pointing, even in the act of discharge; while, what with the noise, smoke, and recoil incident to the explosion of black powder, it is extremely difficult to locate both gun and object aimed at — in fact it can't be done by any but a person of great experience, and to all such I can give no pointers, while I merely write this article for the guidance and help of beginners. Don't be guided in the way of how to handle the gun by the one who is trying to sell it; for, aside from any pecuniary motives, it is always best to put up a gun in the most natural way, and, as nature needs but little instruction, the easiest and quickest manner will generally prove the best.

The bore of the gun is, fortunately, a point on which there can not be so much difference of opinion; for, although some isolated cases are found where men strenuously uphold that a twenty-gauge gun is equal as a game-killer to a ten, yet, fortunately, these are rare; and as the penetration and pattern of any two guns can be readily ascertained, the merits of all bores can easily be discovered. For all field-shooting a twelve-gauge gun should be large enough, while such a one, if of sufficient weight to withstand heavy charges with comfort to the shooter, is also a very serviceable weapon on wild fowl. Such game as prairie chickens, quail, snipe, woodcock, all of which are usually killed inside of thirty-five yards, excepting the first mentioned where cover is short, or late in the season, can readily be killed with twelve or sixteen gauge guns, and as every ounce in weight operates against the sportsman in a hard day's tramp, a field-gun should not weigh over 7½ to eight pounds, while if a general utility gun is needed, a twelve of 8½ to nine pounds will prove a very handy weapon; yet it will not be the equal of a nine-pound, ten-gauge, neither will it handle as easily or freely as one of small bore and less weight.

The *penchant* for feather-weight guns is, unfortunately, leading many otherwise level-headed men to such extremes, that many English sportsmen are to-day using twelve-gauge guns of less than six pounds in weight. Such guns, to be reasonably safe, must be of very best material; and, as no man can with comfort shoot many shots with the full charge of a twelve-gauge gun in such extremely light tubes, the load is usually cut down in powder and lead to about what would be the equivalent of a sixteen-gauge charge. While a gun of this bore would answer every purpose, and be much more symmetrical than a wider one, on such a light frame and aerial stock -*chacun à son goût*—and while men with perfect vision will encumber themselves with eye glasses in the endeavor to adorn their physiognomies, it is quite to be expected that others will claim that their pet little twelve-bores are the equals of any. Actual tests prove to the contrary; but, none being so deaf as those who won't hear, it is useless to reason against reason. It is safe to say that a twelve-gauge gun, with thirty-inch barrels, and weighing about 7½ pounds is about right as a field-gun, and if properly bored will answer every purpose.

When choke-boring first came out, the man who had nothing better than a cylinder was unhappy in the extreme; for the man with the choke-bore was relentless, cruel, and so selfish that he lost no opportunity of displaying the marvelous performance of his improved weapon by sieving paper targets at long range, and making, by contrast with his, the unfortunate owner of the cylinder go fairly crazy with chagrin and mortification in seeing his expensive old pet completely distanced by a common, though closer-shooting, rival. The superiority of the choke-bore was simply squelching; it threw its charge, particularly when loaded with small shot, so much

more compactly, and with fully as much or more penetration, that the poor old gun was discarded, and the full-choked one took its place.

There were some men, though, who, content to let well enough alone, stuck to their colors, or, if they did modify their views, so did they modify their chokes; and experience has clearly proved that this class went in the right direction, for it is much easier nowadays to get too close a shooting gun than one that is too open. A field-gun that makes the greatest killing-circle in one barrel at thirty to thirty-five yards, and ten yards farther with the other, is just as much superior to an excruciatingly close shooter as the choke is to the cylinder, for all distances over forty-five yards, while for all shooting in cover, even a wider spread is an advantage. In the hands of an expert, perhaps as many quail flying through thickets, or ruffed grouse darting between leaves and branches, all the while with a rising out or in curve, may be killed with a very close as with an open bored gun, but I doubt it; for all such shots are snapped at, and it stands to reason that the gun that gives one thirty inches of spread is much more certain to be a killer than the one that cuts that circle down to only twenty or twenty-four inches, so that, as such shots are the rule rather than the exception, the evenness and extent of the killing-circle of a gun should form its standard of merit, rather than its closeness and compactness of delivery. In proof of this, I may mention that the very best field-shots avoid with artistic cleverness the use of full chokes when afield, and reserve them for places where increased distances make them most effective.

But, again, to reduce the number of pellets in a given circle, at any distance, does not necessarily turn out the best-shooting gun; for there are many guns that, although they put more shot in such a circle than another, yet

they are better game-killers, and that is because these shoot more regularly, and make evener, more sieve-like spreads. For instance, a gun may place with one barrel 350 No. 8 shot in a thirty-inch ring, at forty yards, and only 300 with the other. It does not follow that the 300 barrel is the better one, for it may leave great gaps, and put shot on in bunches, while the 350 barrel will give quite as large a spread and a much more killing one all over. Hence it is that the tags which accompany a gun, though of great value in establishing its shooting qualities, yet do not reveal the spread and manner in which the gun delivers its load; so here again comes in the importance of fully testing a gun before purchasing it. Furthermore, so long as all guns are not tagged from the same basis, i. e., at the same range and same sized circle, it is absolutely impossible to draw any but the vaguest conclusions as to their relative merits.

English guns are targeted at forty yards at a thirty-inch circle; and all first-class ones with Curtis & Harvey's powder if black, Schultze or E. C. if smokeless, and nearly altogether with chilled shot, No. 6 of a certain make, generally Newcastle, that runs with great evenness, so that here we can at a glance see how two or more guns compare—provided their tags represent the actual work done by the gun.

With us it is different. Some of our makers use one kind of powder and shot, while another, living in another State, loads with entirely different ammunition, and nearly all of them lean toward coarse, slow powder, totally unlike that usually used by sportsmen or men who shoot much at the trap; hence it is that tags, while serving as a capital guide as between guns of one make or factory, are yet, when fastened to the trigger-guards of half a dozen different makes of guns, of very little value in establishing accurate comparisons between them.

No respectable gun-maker can possibly object to his gun being tried in the open, and by the would-be purchaser, for such men are bent upon pleasing their customers, knowing full well that one good gun sells others, and so on *ad infinitum*.

TRAP-GUNS.

Trap-guns may be said to be of two kinds only, viz., the ten-bore, at any weight, and the twelve-bore, under eight pounds; and just so long as guns of smaller gauge are not allowed the handicap in rise allowed a twelve over a ten, the smaller bores can never come into general competition with the wider ones. It seems absurd to give an advance of two yards to a twelve over a ten, when the sixteen-gauge, which is four sizes smaller than the twelve, has to toe the same scratch; nor is there the least bit of justice in this, for it is well known that an eight-pound twelve-gauge will outshoot any sixteen-gauge, at their ordinary weight, and both charged to their utmost limit.

There are many places where guns go in according to their gauge; but until this obviously just ruling prevails everywhere, the narrow bores will be merely dotted here and there, and never be recognized as of full force in an open competition.

One of the most arbitrary rules governing any kind of sport, is that which limits the weight of the twelve-bore to eight pounds; and it is a mark of the advance of liberalism to learn that Hurlingham has outgrown the tyrannical prejudice that brought trap-guns under the scale at that weight. For instance, why should a strong, able-bodied man be pulled down to an eight-pound gun when he can do better shooting with one that weighs more? Again, the limit of powder being liberal, why make the gun come under a weight that will preclude using the full charge permissible under the rules? No man can

shoot, with comfort, four drams of Curtis & Harvey's fine-grained powder and one and a quarter ounces of shot in a twelve-bore under eight pounds in weight, while in a nine-pound gun this load goes off smoothly and pleasantly; then, if the object is to equalize the weak, light man with the strong, heavy one, it is apparent that the limit of charge must be cut down, as no slight, delicate man can ever hope to stand behind a kicking gun, which jars him from head to foot, as well as his heavier and stronger opponent, whose weight and grip hold the gun much more in check.

There can be no objection to a limit of charge as well as one of gauge, but in the matter of weight there should certainly be no restriction; for if the man uses a heavy gun because he prefers to, the one shooting a lighter one has the advantage of more rapid manipulation, and so it would be a matter of choice, and not one of compulsion, as it now stands.

I have made this digression, and will now resume; nor could I write on this subject without ventilating my views on what has always appeared to me to be a gross injustice, and a most one-sided rule, made to fit one man exactly, and just so surely break another.

The matter of fashion plays a more important part on the kind of piece used for trap-shooting than many would imagine, and so long as London leads in this, we may expect to dance to the tune of the British fiddle. Twelve-bores being in vogue in Europe, *ça va sans dire* that we must also go in for them, not because they are better than our old tens, that have done us such good service, but because most of us have ten-bores, and now, since they won't wear out, we must keep the gun-makers at their trade, and delve in our pocket-books for the wherewith to buy the gun *a la mode*.

Many, whose observation has been drawn to one side

of the argument only, are under the impression that it is more sportsmanlike to kill a pigeon with a twelve than with a ten bore gun; they think it requires finer holding and better marksmanship, while as a matter of fact, both guns being equally choked, the ten gauge will put its load more compactly, at the distance within which pigeons are shot, than the much-lauded twelve. The ten-gauge has one advantage, it shoots harder, for it stands to reason that four and a half drams of powder will drive one and a quarter ounces of shot harder than three and a half; but this very reason ought to carry the ten-bore in a winner, for certainly it is more humane to shoot a bird with the more powerful shooting weapon, in other words, the better killer, than with the weaker one, and, as both can be made to shoot about alike as regards pattern, with the advantage in favor of the larger bore, there can be no good reason advanced why the ten should go to the wall to make way for the twelve, unless it be the same grounds that consign my lady's last bonnet to the depths of her darkest closet -to presently appear in the latest fad from Paris. With men, in guns, substitute London for Paris, and, presto! we have the solution to the problem.

The trap-gun, pure and simple, should possess two qualities, viz., be a perfect fit and an even, regular, hard shooter; these are imperative. Other essentials, that so largely go to make up a first-class field or duck gun, are not of such vital necessity here. For example, we see in every club guns that are so constructed that water could be poured into the breech and lock mechanism, by simply pushing the top lever back and withdrawing the extension rib from its bed. Dust, sand, salt air, rain, in fact anything within a reasonable limit as to size, could be dropped into this catch-all; and yet, in trap-shooting, such a chasm, opening wide to receive whatever may

fall into it, is not a positive detriment, for one seldom shoots in bad weather, so that the "glass case" gun, which at once proclaims its own unfitness to the practiced eye of a thorough sportsman, stands on a level here with guns of so much greater instrinsic worth that comparison between them would be utterly ruinous.

Then, again, trap-shooting is generally done in the vicinity of towns or villages, so that a complete breakdown merely bars the owner from the day's sport, while should such a catastrophe happen far away from the ever-ready gun-smith, then the journey of many miles, taken in perhaps the one annual vacation, assumes different proportions *in toto*. So long, then, as the very best fitting and shooting guns can be obtained that are not open to these most serious objections, it seems strange that so many guns possessed of such glaring defects should sell side by side with others of perfect construction; yet such is the irresistible power of printers' ink, that we may always expect to see catch-penny schemes, well advertised, push their way alongside of true and honest workmanship, that, costing, as it invariably does, more money to execute, leaves less profit to the maker with which to puff his own wares.

A perfect trap-gun, regardless of its bore, weight, or dimensions, should be so bored and regulated in its shooting that it will give the greatest killing spread at the distance for which it is intended to fire it. Therefore, if a marksman shoots at thirty-five yards, his gun, if bored and loaded to best advantage, should give him all the chances compatible with a regular and even spread of shot at that distance, for it is clearly handicapping himself to use a gun that so compactly delivers its load at that distance that nothing but dead center shots will score as hits. A gun so bored that it will keep the load together, and kill at extreme ranges, is indeed a truly

valuable weapon for some kinds of shooting; but to score with such a one at half its killing and striking limit of range, necessitates masterly skill in handling it. Nor can such a gun, in the hands of equal shots, be expected to win when shot against one that favors the shooter by allowing him an extra spread of perhaps a whole foot, at the ordinary range at which trap-guns are used.

In all artificial bird-shooting, it is well to use a moderately close-shooting gun; yet far better is it to accustom oneself to a little quicker shooting than to drill on swift-moving birds, and trust to the gun at the other end. On still, calm days, with perfect trapping and even flights, a good shot can account for a high percentage of his targets at long range, provided his gun is loaded and bored as a "reacher;" but the instant the wind comes up, or the traps throw irregularly, then the whole onus falls on the one at the helm, and then it is that quick shooting comes into play. Some men can't shoot quickly—it isn't in them. Such men hardly ever make successful trap-shots, and most rarely, if ever, first-class marksmen at flying targets. There are too many chances against them when they measure their skill, long drawn out, against the greater certainty of the one who thinks fast, moves with more celerity, and therefore has less allowance and brain-work generally to break his combination. There is a happy medium between snapping at birds and poking after them, while the odds, in these two styles, are usually in favor of the quicker shot. When shooting at long distances, such, for instance, as at ducks on a flight, then the most trifling error at the shoulder carries the load wide of the mark upon reaching the distance at which the bird is flying, and invariably causes a miss; but when inside of forty yards, it is not compulsory to be so dead center, though, of course,

such precautions are always in the right direction, provided it does not take too much time to make them. Shooting, for instance, at a straight tailer from the center trap, when good strong live birds are the targets, one had better pull up and shoot instanter, even if not "dead on," than poke about to get there; for on such shots the vital spot is mighty small, and distance is rapidly increasing, both toward the boundary and away from the score, while, if the second barrel is to be of any avail, it must certainly soon be let drive at the now fast-retreating pigeon. At thirty-three yards, say, a properly bored pigeon-gun will give a killing spread of twenty-four to thirty inches, according to the load, etc.; so that six inches to one side or the other, on a straight-away shot, does not signify, for still the bird will come handsomely inside of the killing-circle.

On side and quartering shots one can afford to be more deliberate; in fact, here errors must not accumulate into many inches, for it does not take a fast-flying bird long to move across and beyond the width of the whole charge. Smokeless powder, however, is of such decided advantage, where both barrels may be used, that nowadays scores are being made that before its advent would have been quite impossible to attain.

DUCK-GUNS.

In this country, the gun most universally used for wild fowl shooting is the heavy ten-gauge, while in England the eight-bore is the favorite. As regards shooting, pure and simple, a ten can't compete with an eight any more than a twelve can with a ten-bore; but in order to be a serviceable gun, if an eight-gauge, it must be of considerable weight, and that is a bar against its use, excepting where the shooter is at a stand-still—be it in a blind, boat, or on a pass; add to which, he must be of

powerful build to shoot for any length of time with a very heavy gun.

One thing must be borne in mind, else experience may be dearly bought at the most inconvenient and critical moment. A man accustomed to shooting a ten-pound, ten-gauge gun at the trap and in the field will find himself completely at sea when using a twelve pound eight-gauge, and as most guns of that caliber go over that weight, why, it is as well to get the swing of such a monster well in hand before attempting to pull down swift-flying birds with it; and as all wild fowl are of the most rapid flight, it is apparent that nothing but perfect control of the weapon will insure success when shooting at this kind of game.

Experience has taught me this, that while I can manage an 11½-pound ten-bore of thirty-one-inch barrels, when I attempt to wield a 13¼-pound eight-gauge with thirty-four-inch barrels, I simply get behind all fast-flying cross-shots, from the very fact that I can't swing the heavier gun, through being unaccustomed to handle so much weight of metal away off from the left hand, so that, although my eight-bore with its full charge is unquestionably a better and much more powerful shooter than any ten-bore, yet I certainly bag much more game with the ten; and so it will be with most men unless they become thoroughly accustomed to holding and moving, with rapidity and precision, very heavy and long-barreled guns. A light eight-bore is a most undesirable and unwise venture; for, if loaded with full charge, it must be an inordinate kicker, while if only half charge, it will do no better execution than a ten-bore, and always will remain a much more unwieldly weapon. Inside of twelve pounds, therefore, for a double gun, better get a ten-gauge, while a full-weighted eight will go from thirteen to fifteen pounds. Such a gun will shoot, with comfort to

the man behind it, seven drams of good powder and two ounces of large shot. When thus loaded, it is quite clear that a ten-bore with five drams and its 1¼ ounces is simply nowhere in comparison.

A thoroughly serviceable wild fowl gun should be as heavy as the owner can handle with comfort and accuracy. If it must weigh between eight and nine pounds, let it be a twelve-bore; if between 9½ and 10½, then, by all means, a ten, while the barrels need not be over thirty inches in length, unless very coarse, slow-burning powder is used, then it may go to thirty-two.

All duck-guns should be bored specially with a view to shooting heavy charges of powder without undue recoil, and be so regulated that they will throw, with compactness and regularity, large shot, as No. 6 is the minimum size used at ducks. A properly bored gun will put over 80 per cent. of its charge of No. 4 shot in a thirty-inch circle at forty yards, while a really first-class one will put fifty pellets of that size of shot on a square foot at that distance. In no branch of shooting is the advantage of choke-boring of so much benefit as in turning out duck-guns, for here, range and penetration, with closeness of delivery, are all-important.

Next to the shooting qualities of guns intended to be carried in all weather, liable at any time to be drenched from breech to muzzle, exposed to damp and rough usage generally, comes the gun which, if I may use the expression, is nearest to being water-proof, or, rather, the kind and make of gun that will stand the most exposure and remain internally dry.

A perfect duck-gun would be one that could be plunged into water in all its length, then withdrawn, wiped off with a rag, and pronounced out of danger of rust. There being no such gun so long as triggers are used, the next approach to perfection is the kind that

will admit of no water excepting through the trigger-plate. It stands to reason that any style of action that will allow water to penetrate into it, or the lock, from above, is a faulty one for duck-guns; and while such systems may do very well for trap-shooting, where a gun is seldom exposed to the rain or snow, yet it should be eschewed when selecting a gun for rough service in the field.

It is not the writer's object to particularize nor to stigmatize certain makes of guns in this chapter, but it is clear that any gun which, when open or closed, presents a gap, in which water or salt air may easily find its way into its working-parts or mechanism, is decidedly a defective style of gun for the wild-fowler; for, even with the staunchest one, water will eventually get into the joints, and rust them, unless far more than the usual amount of care and elbow-grease (besides other grease) be plentifully and constantly bestowed on them. I will, therefore, merely warn the novice to look to this, and thereby save himself many an hour's hard work, to say nothing of the possibility of premature break-downs, caused from rusty surfaces bearing against each other, and therefore increasing the strain and wear and tear of any piece of machinery.

A man who habitually uses a field or trap gun under eight pounds in weight and with a crook of say two inches at comb and three at butt, had better choose a rather straighter stock when in quest of a ten or eleven pound gun, especially if long in the barrels. A gun of seven and a half pounds in weight and thirty-inch barrels, that mounts perfectly with a certain crook, would be no criterion upon which to order a 10½-pound, thirty-two-inch barrel one. The light gun would naturally come up more easily and with less exertion than the heavier one, so that allowance must be made accordingly, and nothing but experience will teach just how great or little the

difference should be. Then, again, a crooked stock is apt to cause a gun to drop at the muzzle, which is a fault great when long shots are in vogue, as the tendency will be for it to drop at extreme ranges, while a stock that holds well up will, in a measure, rectify this depression by giving the charge a higher trajectory.

In the matter of length of stock, duck guns are best made with rather shorter ones than those intended for shooting in warm weather, when less additional clothing is worn, for nothing is more aggravating than to be continually balked by hitting the heel-plate against the hunting-coat, and stay there fast as wax, just because an extra flannel shirt may have been indispensable on a very cold morning.

Rubber pads and all such contrivances are useful enough in their way, in that they check the recoil so far as the shoulder is concerned, but nothing will make a kicking gun pleasant to shoot, and nothing but weight and proper loading (with rational loading) will take up the recoil, for although these appliances may deaden the severity of the blow, yet the whole system receives the shock, which, when often repeated, jars the shooter to such an extent that all pleasure is lost, the shooting impossible, voluntary flinching inevitable, headache most probable—then good-bye sport.

My observation, covering, as it does, a good deal of ground and a great many men, inclines me to the opinion that a ten to ten and a half pound, thirty-inch barrel gun, of ten bore, is about the very best gun for duck-shooting, yet my good friend Fred Kimble, of Peoria, Ill., reputed and I do know I honestly believe it the finest shot as well duck in America, prefers a heavier and much longer gun, his being one of eleven pounds in weight, and barrels thirty-four inches long. That gun, in his hands, with five drams of F. G. Dead Shot, good

wadding, and one and a quarter of 4's, reaches ducks at such tremendous heights, kills them so dead—stone dead in the air—that it seems sacrilegious to even mention one of different dimensions. It may be that greater experience in this, the most difficult of all shooting, would teach me that longer barrels are of benefit.

Of one thing there can be no doubt; a well-bored ten-gauge gun, with thirty-inch barrels, can be made to shoot so compactly that it will be a sure killer, if properly held and loaded, up to fifty-five yards, nearly always reliable at sixty, and generally good up to sixty-five or seventy. Now, in order to fully understand this part of the question, it is essential to clearly understand the pace at which a duck flies. It is far easier to obtain a gun that will kill at sixty yards seven times out of ten, than it is to find a man capable of doing the steering three times out of as many shots; in fact, it takes a remarkably good marksman to kill and bag two ducks in five shots in flight-shooting, even if shooting inside of forty-five yards, while most men who are considered good wild-fowl shots are content with bagging one duck for every three shells. Up to forty yards, a charge of loose shot does not lose much of its highest velocity; but after going fifty yards, it commences to slacken to such an extent that the holding ahead on all cross-shots is a matter of great consideration. For instance, the lead allowed on a duck flying across at forty yards should be doubled if the bird is at sixty; and even then, unless a good double allowance is given, the chances are the load will get where the bird was—"too late."

It would be absurd to lay down any given rule by which this leading on cross-shots could be measured. One man throws his gun to his shoulder, swings well ahead, and pulls; another deliberately catches up to his bird, leads it far more than the other, draws just a frac-

tion of a second, and then pulls trigger. This man must be extremely liberal in the allowance, if in nothing else, for the duck is going ahead all this time. Then comes the man whose muscles and nerves act in quickest concert with his brain. This man does not lead his birds as much, but still *he must* pull in ahead if he would kill, for nothing can overcome the flight of the bird at right angles to the charge of shot—nothing except getting the load where the bird will be when it reaches it; and, by the way, if, as many suppose, a load of shot could be made to fly through the air flat as a plate, instead of stringing out for several feet, it is very doubtful if anyone could be found skillful enough to kill birds on the wing, for then the connection of the bird and the shot would have to be simultaneous, else they would never meet.

The pattern of a shot-gun, therefore, as revealed on a piece of paper, is very misleading, for although there may be gaps and many places untouched by a single pellet, yet were this paper a moving object it would be pretty certain to fly into the shot by going across it, and thereby allowing either the fastest or slowest pellets to perforate it; hence it is that many guns that don't perform above the average when tried at paper circles, yet as game-killers they answer admirably, giving, as they do, a greater margin to the shooter, helping him, by their large spread, to correct faulty aim or improper allowance, where a very close-shooting gun just misses altogether. Yet, as before stated, a duck-gun should be a long-range one, for wild fowl are shy, wary birds, that take plenty of hitting to double them up; and as cripples are, for the most part, lost in many places, it is far better to miss completely than wound a lot of fine birds, doomed to die a lingering death, and furnish food for the marauders that ceaselessly watch their prey.

RÉSUMÉ.

Many years ago, the average American sportsman, to be well served, had to purchase his guns of English make, for very few good and handsome guns were made in his country as compared with those turned out abroad. London then, as now, went in the van, for the most beautiful and highest art in guns certainly claims London as home. There is no disputing this. Still, magnificent guns are built in Birmingham, more particularly by the Messrs. Scott & Son, who have so justly earned a most enviable reputation, here and in many foreign countries, for the general excellence of their fire-arms. Tolley, Greener, Bonehill, and others too numerous to mention, make splendid guns, all well known in America, than which, in its length and breadth, it would indeed be a hard matter to find a more trying country on fire-arms.

Nowadays, and for several years back, guns are produced in America which, for range, durability, closeness of fitting, and absolute worth, can not be excelled, at the price, by any made the world over, so that it is quite *en règle* for some of the English makers to attempt to make it appear that the home guns are merely "muskets," while theirs are works of art. This is a last gasp of the man who finds his much-vaunted and highly overrated wares steadily pushed to one side, to allow others possessing greater and more enduring merit to take precedence. Such a master as Purdey, for instance, is totally oblivious of any and all machine-made guns; they come not into competition with his masterpieces. The man who wants a Purdey is after something different from an ordinary gun, though it be ever so good. He wants symmetry, beauty, elegance, high-bred work all over, combined with greatest shooting power and durability, and he is willing to pay for his fancy—and so he must; while,

for actual service, a home-made gun, costing only one-tenth as much, may be found to be just as well; but it can never present the same appearance, nor have its exquisite balance and grace of outline, and herein lie its principal charms.

There are so many excellent makes of guns in this country, that it is a good deal a matter of choice as to which one we will select. The cheapest American guns are to be preferred to common Birmingham or Belgian makes, as they invariably fit closer in their joints, are more durable, and, as a rule, are much better shooters; aside from this, they are made with interchangeable parts, so that any break-down can easily be remedied at a trifling expense.

In so vast a country, and where so many thousands of men use guns, there ought to be room for all; yet some will get driven to the wall, and experience only will teach many which are the best guns.

COURSING.

By G. Irwin Royce, M. D.

NO other field sport or contest with animals attracts such universal attention as coursing. It is devoid of unpleasant and objectionable features that attach to horse-racing, gunning, and many other legitimate field sports, which in themselves are comparatively harmless; but associations attending them prevent their being engaged in or enjoyed by those who are endowed with intensified moral sentiments.

But coursing, or contesting the speed of greyhounds, although comparatively new in this country as a scientific contest, has an assured popularity, and justly so, for the old and young, ladies and gentlemen, can attend a coursing meet with perfect propriety, and with the most intense pleasure.

Local clubs are being formed in all portions of the United States, and the graceful greyhound is eagerly sought after, not only for field-work, but as a suitable companion for a lady on horseback or a gentleman on a stroll, and as a necessary adjunct to complete an elegant turnout, and also as an ornament for the lawn.

The younger Xenophon, in his description of the greyhound when first introduced into Greece, says:

"In figure the most high-bred are a prodigy of beauty —their eyes, their hair, their color, their bodily shape throughout. Such brilliancy of gloss is there about the spottiness of the parti-color, and, in those of uniform

color, such glistening over the sameness of tint, as to afford a most delightful spectacle to an amateur of coursing.

"I have myself bred up a swift, hard-working, courageous, sound-footed dog. He is most gentle and kindly affectioned, and never before had I any such a dog for myself or my friend, or my fellow sportsman. When not actually engaged in coursing, he is never away from me. If a short time only has passed since he saw me or my friend, he jumps repeatedly by way of salutation, and barks with joy as a greeting to us. He has also different tones of speech, and such as I never heard from any other dog. Now I do not think that I ought to be ashamed to chronicle the name of this dog, or let posterity know that Xenophon the Athenian had a greyhound called Hormē, possessed of the greatest speed and intelligence and fidelity, and excellent in every point."

The Greek sportsmen held their greyhounds in the highest regard, even employing servants as bed-fellows, and would exact as much attention from them as they required shown to their children.

Until the last century, the common people were not allowed to possess a greyhound in many portions of Europe, and even to-day they are acknowledged the aristocrats among dogs.

Should I attempt to give a full history of the greyhound and coursing, it would fill a large volume; but being limited in space, it will suffice to say that coursing, or hunting wild animals with fleet-footed dogs, is of very ancient origin, and the greyhound, in a somewhat varied form from what we now see, was one of the first dogs mentioned in history, and is seen sculptured on the ruins of some of the most ancient structures.

They were originally employed in the chase for large game, as tigers, wolves, wild boars, deer, etc., and were

necessarily of a larger and more ferocious type; but as the larger game became less numerous, the form, size, and disposition of the greyhound was materially changed, until to-day we have several varieties of the same species, different countries having a greyhound best adapted to the purpose for which they are made most useful to their owners.

The different varieties will be briefly considered, and to prevent confusion a classification will be chosen that will enable anyone to distinguish the variety to which each belongs, and breeders and owners will do well to adhere to this classification.

We often hear mentioned the deer-hound, the stag-hound, boar-hound, wolf-hound, and these terms can be applied with equal propriety to the Scotch greyhound, the large fox-hound, the Russian greyhound, or even the Great Dane, and endless confusion is the result; and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I shall arrange them in the following order:

Scotch English Grecian	Greyhound.	Persian Russian Italian

We have only included the best-known and well-authenticated varieties, although there may be other dogs, bearing a resemblance to the greyhound, that are used in hunting game by sight, as the French matin, which, however, resembles the collie quite as closely as the greyhound, and, in fact, is made useful as a herder. Other varieties, as the Irish wolf-hound, so called, might with propriety be included in the list; but they so closely resemble the Scotch greyhound, and are so nearly extinct, that they are hardly worthy of a separate classification.

As to the origin of the name greyhound, very little has been definitely learned. Some authors claim that the name was derived from Græcus (Greek hound), while others

give it as their opinion that it was a corruption from gaze-hound.

Be that as it may, the name is now firmly attached to this family of dogs, and there being such a close resemblance in the several varieties, it is more comprehensive to include all under the name greyhound.

It is generally conceded that they were of Celtic origin, and were brought by the various tribes to the southern part of Europe and the British Isles.

THE SCOTCH GREYHOUND

Will be first considered, because they are better known and are more numerous than either of the other varieties, except the English greyhound, and perhaps more nearly resemble the old Celtic hound.

The extremes of size and peculiarity of coat were brought about by breeding, to adapt them to the more northern and rougher country, and in time they became strong enough to pull down the largest stag. The coat is long and wiry, and well calculated to afford protection against injury and the vicissitudes of the weather in the Scottish mountains.

They are large and powerfully made, with extra-strong bone, and well muscled. The color is more commonly a dark brindle or gray, but often light fawn, or even mouse-color.

Being unable to pursue their game by sight in a mountainous country, the power of scent was cultivated, and speed was in a measure sacrificed to size; and fanciers of the Scotch greyhound are careful to mention the fact that they are able to pursue a wounded deer silently by the trail, and when they have overtaken him, have the power and courage to kill.

Their size naturally inspires confidence, their coarse, bristly coat giving them the appearance of being much

larger than they really are. A variety is coming into favor in this country having a longer and softer coat than the older dogs. The coat, though quite like that of the collie or Newfoundland, lacks that close under-coat which is the real protection against inclement weather, and, when wet, they have a drabbled appearance, which will detract from their usefulness as a rough country worker.

They are, as a rule, intelligent and affectionate to their owner; but when in the field show undoubted courage, and are emphatically killers.

They are gradually becoming more numerous in this country, and will in time be found a necessity, with the other types of greyhounds, in destroying the wolf and coyote, which are gaining in numbers in the Western country to a dangerous extent.

They have been employed successfully in the Rocky Mountains in hunting elk, deer, and other large game, and in coursing antelope on the plains. In the lowlands of Scotland, they are used for coursing hares, but are a smaller variety.

THE ENGLISH GREYHOUND

Is pre-eminently the most popular form of the greyhound family, and has been brought nearer to a state of perfection.

As the larger game became nearly or quite extinct in England, and the hare only remained for the greyhound to pursue, he was gradually reduced in size, the coat became closer, and speed and ability to turn more cleverly was cultivated, and for over 100 years they have been employed in scientific contests; and to-day they are nearly a match for the swiftest hare in this country or in England, but, like the thoroughbred horse, have undoubtedly reached the height of speed possible to attain, and only now and then one appears having

phenomenal speed and working power, that gives him a manifest pre-eminence above his fellows.

To within a few years, little attention has been given to careful breeding in this country, and, as a result, we more commonly see a large, coarse dog, showing an out-cross with some other breed of dog; but as the interest in coursing increases, a strain will be developed that will be able to contest the honors with the best-bred specimens on their native heath.

No attention has ever been given to breeding any special color, and a greyhound may be the color of any other dog known. The name greyhound has no reference to color whatever.

They have been trained to run altogether by sight, and the power of scent has lain dormant for want of exercise; but should a pair of greyhounds be allowed to run a trail, and encouraged to do so, the offspring will show the same inclination in a marked degree.

It is not an uncommon sight to see a greyhound take the trail of a wolf before a pack of fox-hounds, and run by the scent for miles, far in advance of the pack.

Even the imported greyhounds, from the best strains in England, are quite diligent in picking up the trail, when unsighted, from a rabbit they have been pursuing.

Why such erroneous ideas in regard to this breed are held, it is difficult to conceive; but the great majority of those not familiar with their peculiarities entertain the view that they are neither intelligent or affectionate. All kinds of animals have their individual peculiarities, like human beings, and the greyhound is no exception to the rule.

Some of them are as sensitive and delicate as a young fawn, while others are as coarse and stubborn as a mule, possess the courage of a bull-dog, and are what would be called good watch-dogs.

Sir Phillip Warwick, in writing of Charles I., who was as fond of a greyhound as his son Charles II. was of a spaniel, says of him:

"Methinks because it shows his dislike for a common court vice, it is not unworthy the relating of him, that one evening, his dog scratching at his door, he commanded me to let him in, whereupon I took the liberty to say, 'Sir, I perceive that you love a greyhound better than you do a spaniel.'

"'Yes,' says he, 'for they equally love their master, but do not flatter him so much.'"

They are quiet and dignified, and not as demonstrative as many other varieties of dogs, but to their owners display marked affection and a high grade of intelligence.

Again referring to color, we will say that it is a matter of taste as to the color selected. For exhibition only, the fawn, mouse, or white is preferable, but some old coursers contend that the darker colors, as black or brindle, are more hardy; but observation will show that color has very little to do in influencing speed or endurance. To combine the greatest speed with the most pleasing color and outline, should be the results aimed at in breeding.

We also find a considerable variation in size, ranging from 35 to 100 pounds; but the heavier dogs are not adapted to coursing hares, and are only used to hunt larger game. They are more showy, and for the city, to be used as coach-dogs, are more desired than the smaller greyhounds.

A model greyhound should be about sixty pounds in weight, with the muscular system evenly developed, with

"A head like a snake,
A neck like a drake,
A breast like a bream (a fish),
A back like a beam,
Paws like a cat,
A tail like a rat."

The head should be long, and slightly wedge-shaped, with ears small and well set upon the head. The eye should be moderately full, with an expression of alertness, and possessed of a power to see objects at a great distance.

The neck is an important factor, and should be long, to correspond to the length of the legs, in order to enable him to seize the hare, while running at the height of his speed, without throwing extra weight on the fore quarters, and to prevent falling.

The neck should taper from the shoulders to the head, and should be slightly arched. The chest should be capacious, with ribs well sprung, but not so wide at the lower portion as to prevent a free action to the elbows.

The shoulders should be broad and deep, and placed obliquely.

The fore legs should be nearly straight, with only a slight curve at the pasterns, and well set on the feet, which should stand straight, neither turning in or out.

The loin should be strong, moderately wide, gradually tapering from the middle to the attachments, and well arched, and free from any appearance of coarseness, and not too long. With muscular hind quarters and a well-developed loin, a dog has the advantage in the propulsory motion over another dog deficient in this particular, be he ever so perfectly developed otherwise.

The hind legs should be wide as well as thick, with well-bent stifles, and hocks placed low down.

The tail must be long, well set on, and gradually tapering from the body to the extremity, where it should be no larger than a lead pencil. The carriage of the tail by a greyhound has considerable influence in giving a pleasing appearance to his outline. It should be carried low down, and only rolled sufficiently so that the end points toward the top of the hips.

The feet may be either cat-like or more like the hare's foot; but a foot that avoids either extreme is preferable. It should be close, giving the dog the appearance of standing on his toes. A splay-footed dog is to a great disadvantage, especially when running a plowed field.

The bones should be large, but not coarse, in order to give firm attachment to the muscles.

For coursing, the male should weigh about sixty pounds and the female fifty-five.

The Grecian and Persian greyhounds are owned and bred almost exclusively in the countries from which they derive their names, and are little known in connection with public coursing.

The Grecian greyhound is not as large as the English greyhound, and has a coat of hair more like a setter, with rather long, drooping ears and a bushy tail. He has a very pleasing and graceful outline.

The Persian greyhound is smaller than the English greyhound, but made on a more graceful model. On the body, the coat is closer than the Grecian, but the ears have a coat of long, silky hair, like a spaniel. The ears are long and drooping, and the legs are more or less feathered, like the setter. The tail is long, and well curved, and is unfortunately provided with a superabundance of long, bushy hair, giving it the appearance of being overburdened.

They are used for coursing the hare, antelope, wild ass, and boar. Although they are slender and delicate in appearance, they are possessed of most wonderful courage.

They are used, in connection with the falcon, in pursuing the wild ass and antelope, which are more than a match for even these fleet-footed dogs; and not infrequently the rifle is brought into requisition to assist in their capture, as these fearless riders pursue the game

over the roughest mountainous country, across ravines, through swift-flowing streams, undaunted by the most formidable obstacles.

The Russian greyhound, which is more commonly called the Siberian wolf-hound, is probably the most majestic and noble specimen of the greyhound. He is a large, powerful fellow, with the courage of a lion, and the speed and endurance of both the Scotch and English greyhounds.

They are used for killing large game, especially the wolf, but are occasionally used in following the hare. They hunt by scent as well as by sight, and are often taken out in packs in hunting the wolf.

The coat is long, soft, and silky, with a close undercoat, that enables them to endure the rigors of the Russian winter. Their color is a dark brown, or gray, with variations in shading. They are owned mostly by the nobility in Russia, and but few specimens of the breed can be found in this country.

Undoubtedly they would be well adapted to our Northwestern country, being well able to endure the cold, and would materially assist in ridding the country of the wolves and coyotes.

THE ITALIAN GREYHOUND

Is emphatically a parlor pet, and is of no practical use in the pursuit of game. In their outline they resemble the English greyhound, but are as delicate in structure as a young fawn, and being natives of a warm country, are extremely sensitive to cold. They have less diversity of color, being usually of a delicate, golden fawn-color, but are frequently mouse-color, or may be pure white, or mottled, and are very attractive in the drawing-room.

Their weight is about ten pounds, but often much heavier, from careless breeding, and some of the larger

specimens have been used for coursing the hare or small rabbit.

Now that coursing is thoroughly established in this country as a popular pastime, and in view of the value which must attach to the greyhound from now on, special care should be exercised in breeding this noble animal. An inferior greyhound shows defects more quickly, to an experienced judge, than almost any other breed. A departure from the laws of symmetry detracts from that grace which they so perfectly illustrate in outline and motion. The laws governing the reproduction of species are simple and easily applied, but success in breeding depends upon an instinctive love for the animal kingdom, combined with a close study of formation.

The Darwinian theory of selection, if one acquaints himself with it, will lead to success in breeding all kinds of animals, for the rules laid down are always sure in their results if properly applied.

It need not take a long series of experiments, requiring years, for even a novice to produce a greyhound having a beautiful outline, with the greatest speed attainable, for there are enough good greyhounds in this country, including those recently imported, to give a foundation for breeding.

The first desideratum is speed, and the second is ability to recover after turning a hare; but a perfect outline, with a pleasing color, with strength and endurance, should by no means be ignored in an effort to produce a speedy greyhound.

All of these qualities can be secured by careful breeding.

The theory of selection, and its practical application, is based on the principle that like begets like; and by selecting both parents having the qualities desired

largely developed, the offspring will likely have the same developed in a still more intensified degree—some of them, at least. Now, to overcome any marked defect in either parent, and to prevent its being shown in the young, select for a mate to the one defective, one having the peculiarity *largely* developed.

In some of the produce the defect will be entirely overcome, while in others of the same litter it will plainly show. Retain for future breeding those showing the desired points, and discard the defective ones.

Always keep the best.

Unless these rules are observed, failure will nearly always result.

How often we see disappointment in breeding, when an inexperienced person, transient in his enthusiasm, but having an abundance of cash, attempts to reproduce a perfect specimen of any variety of the canine race by purchasing and mating two prize-winners, one taking honors on the bench and the other in the field. Either, for the purpose designed, have the qualities desired, and justly won the medals, but a marked dissimilarity of structure, and being of a distinct strain, and possibly defective in the same points, prevents their mixing properly, and their offspring are quite worthless; and the novice is disgusted, sells out at a sacrifice, and will contend that he was swindled in the purchase.

Had a scientific breeder been consulted, he would have seen at a glance that it was an improper mating.

Not that this is always the case, for frequently one blunders into success, and some of the best combination dogs have been produced in this way; but should the matter be traced up carefully, it would be found that, more frequently than otherwise, the results were obtained by one conversant with the laws governing the reproduction of species.

One of the principal causes of failure in breeding is in leaving these matters in the hands of attendants, who have little or no interest further than to obey orders, when it does not conflict with their ease and pleasure.

A person not *having time* to personally superintend the mating of any fine stock, should not engage in breeding with any expectation of success or profit.

The care of the greyhound while rearing its young, and while in training for field contests, should be carefully studied; and, as the interest extends, the novice will eagerly seek all information obtainable, that he may compete successfully with those having obtained their knowledge by careful observation and an expensive experience.

The first requisite is to obtain a pair of greyhounds from an honorable and successful breeder, and then bear in mind that the training should really begin sixty-three days previous to their birth. The mother should be carefully fed, and all the affection possible lavished on her.

She should be exercised regularly to within ten days of the birth of the future winners.

The disposition, and many other qualities desired, can be stamped in the young, through the mother, the first thirty days of conception; and in order to give activity, an eagerness for the chase, and a desire to kill, the mother should be taken into the field and allowed to share in the chase. To allow her to lie around the kennel or yard, and accumulate fat and laziness, is positively injurious to the mother and young both.

While in the field, great care should be exercised, lest she become exhausted or overheated, especially the latter. After the birth of the pups, the mother should be fed all she will possibly eat, and food of rather a sloppy nature. The little ones should be fed about the

fourth week, or earlier if they are not receiving sufficient nourishment from the mother.

The food should be made of boiled milk, rolled crackers, stale bread, and well-cooked meat picked up into small fragments, with a moderate amount of thoroughly cooked oatmeal.

Feed this mixture twice daily for two weeks before fully weaning them.

The stomach and bowels will by this means become accustomed to the change gradually, and when finally taken from the mother will not suffer in the least.

They should now be fed three times a day, and with regularity.

After the third month, the food can be made more solid, and soft bones can be given them now and then. Table-scraps, well selected, are often made a standard diet for growing pups, but the greatest care should be exercised in selecting them, especially when obtained from hotels, or acid substances, pie, an excess of mustard, salt, or pepper will be inadvertently added, and may cause a disturbance of the stomach or bowels that will be difficult to remedy.

Admonish the cook to provide only meal, bread, potatoes and other vegetables. A gentle admonition in this case will not suffice, and a repetition will do very little injury.

For the first nine months, pups should be allowed to run about with little or no restraint, and should be fed liberally, and kept sleek and fat. If allowed sufficient liberty, they will take all the exercise that they require, especially if there are two or more together.

If you are obliged to confine them to a kennel, supply as much space as possible; but under no circumstances should they be kept constantly on a chain before they have reached maturity. Other breeds of dogs will appar-

ently do well and thrive, and only see freedom for a very few minutes each day, but a greyhound is not made that way.

Although you may exercise your authority, and oblige them to go into the kennel, still it is better to induce them to go in by offering a bit of food. Never attempt to subdue their will or break their spirits, for a greyhound becomes cowed and sneaky by harsh treatment; their usefulness is greatly lessened, or, more likely, they are ruined entirely. When of mature age, they can, with patience, be taught anything, but usually their education is sadly neglected, and they give one the impression that they have little intelligence; but take those having ordinary dog sense, and carefully teach them various tricks, and see how readily they will take to their lessons after finding out what is wanted of them.

Actual field-training can begin about the tenth month, especially with the females, as they develop about six months earlier than the dogs.

Allow them to follow the carriage or saddle-horse for a short distance each day; but until the muscles are well developed, they should not be allowed in the field after game.

When first taken to the coursing-ground, let them accompany a pair of good reliable killers; and after the game is secured, allow them to mouth it, and encourage them by a friendly pat. Soon they will learn the trick, and then may assist one dog for a race or two. They may now be twelve months old, and a pair of youngsters may be taken afield together.

Their diet can be changed gradually to a drier and more concentrated food, and the largest meal given at night, that digestion may be completed while they are sleeping. A bit of dry bread or a few small pieces of meat in the morning is all-sufficient.

A greyhound, like a wolf, will pursue his game best when hungry; and even two days of abstinence will do a dog very little injury, and will enable him to show almost phenomenal speed for a special occasion.

A full stomach prevents perfect lung action, and a greyhound may be permanently injured by allowing him to exert himself to his utmost, as an ambitious dog will, immediately after a large meal.

The food best adapted to mature dogs, while preparing them for field contests, can be prepared daily with the best results. Prepared food, or patent biscuit, is subject to changes of the atmosphere, and becomes stale and mouldy by age, and is soon inhabited by a numerous family of insects, and often does much injury to dogs in training.

An article that will best serve the purpose for a steady diet can be made as follows:

Boil a quantity of beef or mutton in sufficient water to make a rich soup; when the meat is well done, salt a little, separate the meat from the bones, and cut in small fragments; mix with this equal parts of old bread, well-cooked oatmeal and corn-meal, making a batter about the consistency of ordinary corn-cake batter; spread it quite thin in a bake-pan, and bake till quite dry and hard.

This will keep for some time, and will make a most excellent training-food, although it is more difficult to prepare than ordinary table-scraps, meat and the like, but will pay in the end.

Of course, a little judgment should be used, and the dog given more or less of a variety daily.

Vegetable matter is a necessity, given in some form, potatoes, carrots, or beets being the best.

The food should never be made sloppy for a greyhound in training, and only enough food given to keep him in good health, with coat glossy, and with the muscular

system developing gradually, without showing an ounce of excessive adipose tissue.

A raw bone may be given twice per week. Dogs seem to require an excess of carbonate and phosphate of lime, and their efforts to secure the meat on the bone will keep the tartar from forming on the teeth, and also keep the gums healthy.

When it is impossible to prepare the food as directed, give carefully selected table-scraps.

Whatever the diet may be, try and select food that you can surely supply to the end of the coursing season, and adhere to it strictly.

To make a radical change two weeks before a coursing meeting is fatal to success. Dogs were brought to the meeting at Great Bend, a few days previous to the meeting, that had been petted and fed at home like one of the family, but hearing of Spratt's biscuit being such a valuable training-food, their owners would feed them quite liberally of the biscuit, hoping to supply a special stimulus for the occasion; but what was their disappointment to find the poor creatures' bowels out of condition, and quite undone for a six days' contest.

We had other examples, where young dogs had been fed on the coarsest corn-meal to within three weeks of the meeting, and then changed to a diet selected from the best hotel-scraps; and although they were fed sparingly of this, they became "logy" and out of heart, and of course made a very sorry showing in the public contests, although they were quite speedy.

Two meals per day is ample for a dog in training, but one is much better if you accustom him to it from the first. The heartiest meal should *always* be given at night.

The quantity of food for each dog should be regulated as before stated, and no two will require the same kind

or amount; and to throw a large quantity on the ground promiscuously, before a kennel of dogs in training, is the sheerest nonsense. Some will eat an enormous quantity in less time than we are telling it, while others may take a bone and retire to a corner and only secure about a mouthful. Each individual dog should be fed separately.

There are various methods of giving exercise, but road-work is, above all, absolutely necessary. This may be given by allowing the dog to follow the carriage or a horse under the saddle. It is a favorite method of the English to lead their greyhounds in the field for hours daily. This is too laborious, and requires too much time, unless one has no other business except to care for a couple of greyhounds; even then we believe that, after the first few days, a walk for a half-mile, a trot for a mile, a gallop for another mile, a run for a quarter, and a walk in, is far preferable.

The use of the brush, followed by a vigorous hand-rubbing, is invaluable, and should be employed as one of the most reliable assistants in fitting up greyhounds.

The principles of the massage treatment are quite applicable in this case. Roll, pinch, rub, and pat the whole body, especially the shoulders, loins, and hips. This passive exercise, if thoroughly given, will take the place largely of field-work.

Very few actual chases should be given the greyhound in training, and only enough to make him eager. Two, or at the utmost three, races per week after rabbits is ample for any greyhound in training; for, if allowed to pursue game too frequently, they lose that eagerness so much desired in a greyhound, and are quite apt to acquire a habit of running cunning, or waiting behind for the head dog to turn the rabbit, which they soon learn will be done when they are closely pursuing the game.

This will disqualify any dog from further competition in a public coursing meeting, as will be seen by the rules governing coursing.

A greyhound after the fourth running season is not safely employed in public coursing, although the famous Miss Glendyne, of England, ran her coursing honestly last spring, winning the Waterloo purse, although she was defeated for the Waterloo cup by a three-legged hare being raised at her first course, and her opponent did such vigorous work at the start, and caught the lame hare so quickly, that she scarcely got to her work. She divided the Waterloo cup in 1885; won it in 1886.

However, it is much safer to leave the old ones in the kennel when selecting a brace for a public contest.

SLIPS.

When taking a pair of dogs into the field for training, a pair of slips is as necessary as a harness for a horse when you desire to drive. The advantage to a dog so taught is very appreciable in a close course, for the run up to the hare may be the only advantage one dog may have over his adversary in a sharply contested trial.

The slips are an ingenious device, so constructed that a pair of dogs are held together as though in a yoke.

The two straps around their necks, instead of being buckled, are held by a spring, as the dogs stand side by side. The straps are attached to a piece of steel by swivels. This will enable the dogs to turn without getting twisted or tangled up. A leading-strap is attached to one of the swivels, and passes back between the dogs to the slipper, or man who does the leading. Through this round leading-strap runs a strong string, on one end of which is fastened a small iron pin. This pin holds the collars in place until the slipper has the word from the judge to let them go. He then pulls the string, and both

collars are loosened from the dogs' necks, and they are free to pursue the hare untrammeled by anything, and they are thereby given an even start in the race.

THE JACK-RABBIT.

There is probably but one animal that will call into activity all of the qualities of the greyhound, and that is the jack-rabbit; and he being such an important factor in coursing, we deem it essential to give a general description of him, for the benefit of the many readers who have never seen one of these little fleet-footed residents of the plains.

He is, undoubtedly, the swiftest animal in the world for a short distance; and when in good condition, and in training for being pursued, frequently he is more than a match for the swiftest greyhound that ever had an existence.

Their habitat is on the open prairie, from the eastern border of Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota to the Pacific Coast. In different localities their size and color vary considerably, but they all retain their peculiarities where found. In Dakota they are very large, and are lighter in color, and have a thicker coat.

In New Mexico and vicinity they are very large, but much darker in color than in Dakota and other Northern States.

There are two varieties, the white-tail and the black-tail; and, as the name would indicate, the tail is the distinguishing feature, although there are other marked peculiarities worthy of mention.

The black-tail has a lighter body and longer legs, and the ears are tipped with seal-brown for about an inch. The tail much resembles the common cotton-tail in form, but on the upper surface is the same color as the tips of the ears. They keep it rolled close to the

back, and where it rests, there is also a streak of dark brown.

The color is a light brown or gray, very closely resembling the dry grass. The gray color gradually gets lighter from the back to the under part of the body, where it is pure white.

A full-grown jack-rabbit will weigh from eight to fifteen pounds, the female being larger by two or three pounds.

The white-tail variety has shorter legs, a heavier body, with a closer coat, than the black-tail, and closely resembles a young deer in color. The ears are shorter, and tipped with black; the tail is pure white, about four inches long, and has a coat of hair less compact than the black-tail; it tapers to a point, and when running is carried straight back. This variety is found in greater numbers on the open buffalo-grass prairies, and is often spoken of as the prairie hare, and probably quite resembles the English hare in many respects.

The jack-rabbit never burrows; but when closely pressed by a greyhound, especially when nearly exhausted, will suddenly dash into a badger-hole, or even a wolf-den, and not infrequently will take refuge in an old deserted burrow that will scarcely conceal their form from view. They rarely resort to a thicket, but depend on speed and ability to dodge their pursuers to effect their escape.

Their home, or form, as it is called, is a slight depression in the ground, under a tuft of grass. They back into this, and flatten themselves out, with ears laid close to their backs, only about half of the body being exposed. With the grass blowing over them, and with the color so nearly the same hue, it is a difficult matter to see them when not more than six feet away. They remain at home during the day, but are on foot as soon as the shades of night appear. Not infrequently they are found

on a plowed field, or stubble; but even here, where one would naturally expect to see them exposed, they have the faculty of affiliating so closely with mother earth that they are not seen until they rise, like a phantom, and glide away. Their coat of hair is of that texture that enables them to stand the severest cold or the scorching rays of a southern sun.

The young are brought into the world with a full coat of hair, and eyes open, and are soon jumping about. They are quite different from the cotton-tail in this respect, which are born hairless, and remain in the nest for about a week.

The natural enemies of the jack-rabbit are the wolf and hawk. When raised from his form, and if not closely pressed, he will go away with a sort of hop-step-and-jump, with ears erect, and will delude a novice with the impression that he is crippled. If carefully observed, it will be seen that they have the two hind legs close together, and use them as one. As they hop away, they change from side to side in a very defiant way, now and then making a long, high jump. These tactics are kept up for some time if pursued by a common cur dog; but turn a greyhound loose in the wake of a jack-rabbit, and he will find that there is a force in nature hitherto unknown to him, and he unfurls his legs, drops his ears close to his body, and you can only see a streak of jack-rabbit half a mile long. When caught by a greyhound, they are killed almost as quickly as though shot by a rifle-ball, and for this reason all the elements of cruelty are abolished in coursing. He is a prolific breeder, and will probably never become extinct, and we can be assured of always having a supply on which to try our greyhounds.

The method of competition, or the manner of contesting the speed of two greyhounds, will now be considered. The dogs are drawn by lot, and in pairs, and an experi-

enced man, called a slipper, is selected to handle the dogs while in the field. One dog wears a red collar and the other a white, made of flannel cloth, one light thickness, for the purpose of enabling the judge to distinguish the dogs while running. This is necessary if the two dogs are of the same color. When starting to a course, a long line of beaters—ladies and gentlemen on horseback -is thrown out, in the shape of a crescent. The dogs, led by the slipper, are in front, and the judge close by. The spectators are permitted to follow close in the wake of the beaters. It is a grand sight to see such a cavalcade marching over the smooth prairie, there having been at least 3,000 people in attendance at the meeting, in 1888, of the American Coursing Club, at Great Bend, Kan., where the meetings are held.

The crescent form in which the beaters move is for the purpose of forcing the rabbit to the center, and before the dogs.

As he jumps from his form, the slipper attracts the attention of the dogs to him by some exclamation, and, as they take sight, they dash for him with such force as to nearly upset the slipper; and when the rabbit is about eighty yards away, the word is given by the judge, the slipper pulls the string, the collars are loosened from their necks, and away they go. Such a long lead gives the greyhounds an opportunity to display their speed, and affords the rabbit a chance to escape; and not infrequently he takes advantage of this kindly offer, and never lets the greyhounds reach him, and escapes in tall grass or weeds A race is decided on the principle that the dog showing the greatest speed and ability to turn the quickest is the superior greyhound, and necessarily does more toward catching the hare, although he may not kill him; and in order to estimate their relative value, the work done is counted by

POINTS.

Speed is valued at one, two, or three points, and depends on the degree of superiority shown; but speed alone is not sufficient to decide a race, unless subsequent work is done, except in a very long race to covert.

The *go-by* is where one dog, at any stage of the race, starts a length behind his adversary and runs by him, and gets a length in the lead; for this he is given two points, or, if they are running on a large circle, and he passes him on the outside, he is counted three points.

The *turn* is where the rabbit is so closely pressed that he turns at a right angle; for this the dog making the turn is scored one point.

The *wrench* is where the rabbit is turned slightly from a straight line, but at less than a right angle, and still keeps the same direction; for this the greyhound is counted a half point.

The *trip* is an unsuccessful effort to hold a rabbit, although the greyhound may touch him, or even tumble him, and counts one point.

The *kill* is counted two points, one or nothing. If he is caught by a greyhound while running straight away, the highest count is given; but should one dog pick him up as the foremost greyhound turns him back, he is not allowed anything.

Those not conversant with the rules of coursing are quite apt to give all credit to the dog that catches the rabbit; and the greyhound that has done all the work, and even turns the rabbit into his mouth, is given no credit whatever.

These points can be repeated an unlimited number of times in one race, and it keeps the judge on his mettle to keep the counts, as they are rapidly repeated.

One very important point in the rules, that is often overlooked, is that after six successive points have been made, the greyhound making them is counted double for every point made after the six until the other dog scores.

No allowance is made for an injury to a greyhound, except he be ridden over by the owner of the opposing greyhound.

There can be but little jockeying in coursing, as the dogs are free, and will do their utmost to kill the hare; and for this reason the element of fairness enters largely into this style of competition. Coursing proper is an open field pastime, and the rabbits are free, and are frightened from their resting-place; and they flee for safety, and are only limited by the face of the earth. But another method, called inclosed park coursing, has been instituted, whereby the chase is confined to an inclosure, and the rabbits are captured, and confined to a space varying from 100 acres to several sections. They are kept in bounds by a closely woven wire fence. They are allowed their liberty until such time as they are required for testing the speed of the greyhounds; they are then driven into a corral, and are let out one at a time for the races.

The race-track is usually a narrow space of 100 to 200 yards in width, and from one-half to a mile long. At the end of the track, there is an escape for the rabbit through a high board fence; so if the greyhound is unable to catch him in this distance, he is free. They are run over this track to the escape very frequently previous to a formal competition; and when an old rabbit is in good training, a greyhound stands very little show of catching him. A grand stand is erected on each side of the track, and the spectators are afforded a grand view of the race from start to finish.

Inclosed park coursing is not an experiment, as the sport has been in vogue for a number of years in England, Australia, and in California.

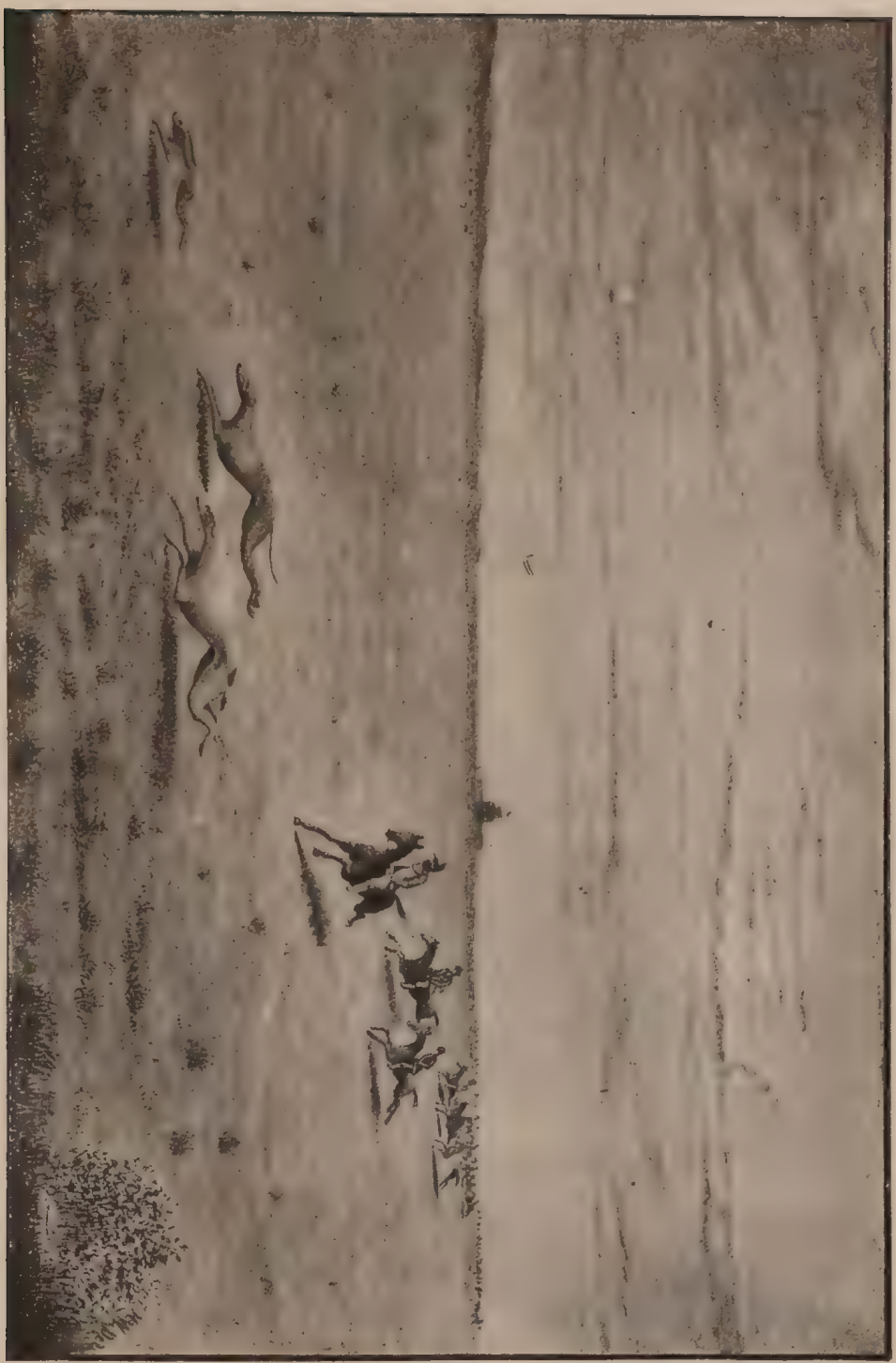
At Hutchinson, Kan., a model park has been completed within the past year, and arrangements have been made for a large meeting annually.

There is a growing popularity for the park coursing, and we will undoubtedly see parks established near many of the Eastern cities.

The American Coursing Club meeting at Great Bend, Kan., is the national and grand meeting of this country, and will compare favorably with the great Waterloo meeting at Altcar, England. The meeting is held in an open field, or on a large ranch, comprising about seventeen sections in a body. It is situated on a vast plain, called the Cheyenne Plains, and is as level as ground can be, affording a grand view for a mile. The jack-rabbits have always found this well suited to their wants, and recently have been well protected from hunters and dogs, and are in no sense artificially prepared for the trials, but are hunted in their natural state. They often flee to the elevated ground, three miles from the center of the plains, and escape their pursuers, the swift greyhounds.

At 9 o'clock in the morning of a pleasant October day, the beaters are in line, and a long train of carriages are close in the rear; and as they march across the level stretch of country, with every mind centered on the one object that will cause the blood to tingle in the veins, the cry is given, "There he goes!" and a long pair of ears rises like a phantom, and speeds away, challenging the dogs for a trial of speed.

The quick-sighted greyhounds in an instant jump to the limit of the slips, and the slipper races away with them for a few feet, and then the word is given by the judge; the cord is pulled, and away they go like a rocket,



GREYHOUND COURSING.

with the judge, reporters, and owners of the greyhounds close in the rear, while the spectators halt to view the race. There are only two greyhounds in the race at one time, and they are easily distinguished at a distance; and as the favorite leads up, the excitement begins. The red collar has turned the rabbit, with the white collar only a jump behind; and as he makes an unsuccessful effort to catch, bunny jumps nimbly to one side, and the greyhounds go on for a few feet, and while they are trying to regain their stride the jack-rabbit has gained on his pursuers, and away he speeds for safety. The dogs turn, catch sight of the fleeing game, and quickly settle down for another dash. The red is again in the lead, but the white is just getting to his work, and gradually draws up to his antagonist; is now at his flank, now shows a head in the lead, and in another moment is a full length in the lead. "A go-by! a go-by!" is shouted from hundreds of throats, and the white scores two points. He is now at the rabbit, and another turn is made. The gamy red is handy by, and before the rabbit fairly gains his stride, he is forced to the tactics of jumping from side to side to avoid his stroke, and six wrenches are made.

The wrenches allow the white dog to draw up, and he being but a point ahead, the interest deepens.

Away they stride, like a double team, for nearly a quarter, with no appreciable advantage to either. The pace is too hot for bunny, and gradually they draw up, and a turn is made—another and another in quick succession. The red dog makes a terrific dash to catch, but only trips, loses his footing, and over and over he goes, but is up again without injury, and is soon taking part in the exchanges; but the white, seemingly cognizant of the fact that he has two points to make up, exerts himself to the utmost, and, with a most phenom-

enal burst of speed, makes a straight go-by and kills the rabbit. Up goes the white flag, and the wearer of the white collar is the winner by four points; and the judge hears the shouts from the spectators a mile away.

He dismounts to give his panting steed a moment's rest, and secures the game as the owners of the dogs hasten up to relieve their thirst from a well-filled flask of pure water.

As the dogs are secured, another brace is placed in the slips, and race follows race in quick succession. About twelve races are run in a day, or more if the rabbits are plentiful, and this is kept up for six successive days. In a sixty-four-dog stake, there will necessarily be thirty-two pairs the first round, and thirty-two winners; sixteen pairs in the second, eight in the third, four in the fourth, and two in the last round, leaving one greyhound winner over all. He will necessarily run six races in as many days; but frequently, at the close, he may be obliged to run two races in one day. The dog last running with the winner is called the runner up, because he ran through the races up to the last race without being defeated once.

To judge the races successfully, it requires a swift and level-headed horse, a fearless rider, with quick perception and staunchness, and thoroughly conversant with the rules.

It is almost impossible to keep with the dogs; but the frequent turns enable the judge to cut corners, and in this manner is kept in sight. Not infrequently a badger-hole suddenly appears, and as the horse attempts to avoid it, he loses his footing, and a header is taken that disturbs the judge's anatomy not a little; but no serious accident has befallen anyone in three yearly meetings, although several have been thrown from their horses with considerable violence.

The old style of coursing is perhaps the most enjoyable, it being in the nature of a wild, free gallop over the smooth, level prairie, after a pack of, say twelve, greyhounds, uncoupled and free.

A private party of ladies and gentlemen, mounted on ponies, meet in the suburbs of some small city or village, and by a ride of three miles are on good running-grounds, where the rabbits are numerous; and, after readjusting the saddle-fastenings, the hunt begins. They have scarcely formed in line before a rabbit is raised, and away go dogs, and riders at their heels, yelling like a band of Indians on the war-path, and often with the ladies in the lead riding like mad.

The lady first in at the death secures the "brush," which in this instance consists of a pair of long ears.

Several rabbits are usually caught in a half-day's hunt, and all return brightened in spirits, and with appetites sharpened to a keen edge.

Wolf or coyote hunting is similar to rabbit coursing, and is indulged in quite as frequently, only it differs somewhat in the wind-up, there being a fierce fight between dogs and wolf before the despoiler of the hen-roosts is finally dispatched.

It is difficult to make a close start on the coyote, and a long, hard ride straight away for five miles, over more or less rough country, across streams, through corn-fields and hedges, is expected, giving one a rare opportunity of displaying good horsemanship. It is wonderfully exhilarating, and after once being enjoyed, leaves a strong desire for a repetition of the pleasure.

Antelope coursing with greyhounds is usually attended with considerable danger to both dogs and horses, as the race is a long, straight-away run for miles on the open prairie, without a turn.

The antelope being very keen of sight, is difficult to

approach, and will scarcely allow a party to get nearer than a quarter of a mile. They run in a wide circle, and the dogs have a long, stern chase to reach them.

Often the hunter can, by strategy, approach to within 100 yards, by making a detour, and coming upon them from behind a slight elevation on the prairie; and by this means the greyhound can make a sudden dash, and secure an antelope before he fairly gets his stride. They seize them by the ham-strings, and throw them to the ground, and then take the throat.

The greyhound is frequently killed by the excessive and long-continued exertion and heat.

Although the sport of coursing originated in England, it appeals strongly to our American tastes. It is attended with just enough of the spirit of competition, gives a grand display of speed, showing the greyhound in his true element, and partakes of a spice of adventure, and shows a graceful rider to the best advantage, and is free from cruelty.

As this delightful pastime is better understood, and the aristocrat among dogs is more generally appreciated, and truly his day is approaching, it will surpass in interest all other out-door sports, and the greyhound will be placed in the front ranks of the great canine family.

"Yet if for sylvan sport thy bosom glow,
Let thy fleet greyhound urge his flying foe.
With what delight the rapid course I view!
How does my eye the circling race pursue!
He snaps deceitful air with empty jaws;
The subtle hare darts swift beneath his paws.
She flys; he stretches now with nimble bound;
Eager he presses on, but overshoots his ground.
She turns; he winds, and soon regains the way,
Then tears with gory mouth the screaming prey."

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